

T-H-A-N-K-S:

Think Hands And No Kisses!

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* Baby charity Kit Tarka Foundation launches T-H-A-N-K-S campaign in response to shocking stats that reveal **60% of new and expectant parents don’t know that herpes infections in young babies can be fatal**

A new survey of over 1500 new and expectant parents reveals that, worryingly, **6 in 10** do not know that herpes infections in young babies can be fatal, despite the fact that **70%** of Brits carry the infection.

The research was carried out by Kit Tarka Foundation, a baby charity which works to prevent newborn baby deaths through raising awareness of neonatal herpes.

Young babies are particularly susceptible to infections yet, according to survey results, more than **1 in 6 parents** would allow a person that they did not know well to touch their baby without first washing their hands, whilst **a third of parents** said they would not ask family and friends to wash their hands before holding their very young baby.

Interestingly, **almost half (45%)** of the mothers and birthing parents surveyed stated that they would allow friends and family to kiss their very young baby, but **52%** of these would do so reluctantly.

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As part of the open responses in the survey, numerous parents reported that their babies had been touched by strangers or held or kissed by friends or family members without consent being given but found it awkward and uncomfortable to ask others to change their behaviour.

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In response to these findings Kit Tarka has launched a campaign to remind anyone coming into contact with a young baby to remember their **T-H-A-N-K-S: Think Hands And No Kisses!**

Kit Tarka founder Sarah de Malpaquet said *“****The results from our survey are worrying to say the least. It’s clear that a strong public health campaign is needed to raise awareness around the dangers of cold sores to newborn babies, and the importance of good hygiene when visiting very young babies.”***

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\*\*ENDS\*\*

**Notes to Editors:**

**Survey Methodology**

The survey was designed by Kit Tarka Foundation and created using the SurveyMonkey portal. It was shared by the National Childbirth Trust (NCT), Bounty and National Maternity Voices on social media channels and with recipients of their email newsletters.

Expectant parents and those with a baby under 1 year of age were invited to participate in the survey. Responses were anonymous with no identifiable data collected.

1,529 completed questionnaires were returned. Of these, 18 (1.2%) were completed by non-birthing parents. This report analyses the responses of the 1,511 questionnaires completed by pregnant people and birthing parents only.

At the time of the survey, 562 of these respondents (37%) were pregnant and 949 (63%) were the mother or birthing parent of a baby under 1 year old. 82% of parents described their ethnic group as White and 18% were parents from Black, Asian, mixed or minority ethnic backgrounds. <1% chose not to answer this question.

1,501 (99%) of respondents identified as female (including transgender women), 2 identified as male (including transgender men), 2 as non-binary and 6 preferred not to say.

Respondents were invited to participate through pregnancy and parenting platforms, suggesting a certain level of engagement with pregnancy and parenting issues and possibly better knowledge of these issues. 1,195 (79%) of respondents said they had completed a college or university education or higher compared to 42% of the general UK population.

**About Kit Tarka**

Kit Tarka Foundation (KTF) was established in 2018 by Sarah and James de Malplaquet after their son Kit Tarka died at just 13 days old.

After discovering that Kit had died from neonatal herpes (the cold sore virus in babies), Sarah set out to learn as much as she could about this devastating disease. She was astonished by the lack of awareness amongst the general public and, most disturbingly, by the huge gaps in knowledge of symptoms and best practice in the UK medical profession. It soon became clear that Kit’s death had been preventable and that the lack of knowledge around the transmission, recognition and treatment of the virus had led to his tragic and untimely death.

After contacting several charities to see if they could facilitate long overdue research into neonatal herpes but being told it was not within the scope of any of them, Sarah and James decided they needed to establish their own charity to help prevent more tragedies like Kit's. To that end, KTF was launched with a mission to prevent newborn baby deaths through research and education.