

BECOMING A DAD

Congratulations on your new baby! This is an exciting and life-changing moment for your family. It is probably also a tiring and somewhat stressful time.

Here are three tips to help you navigate being a father to a newborn:



1. Learn to soothe your baby
2. Help your partner and communicate with her
3. Find healthy ways to manage your stress

LEARN TO SOOTHE YOUR BABY

All babies cry, it is their way of communicating with you. Babies fuss an average of 1.5 hours per day during the first few months. Knowing how to calm your crying baby is a great skill to have as a new dad.

In order to soothe your baby, you need to figure out why they are crying. Some reasons your baby may cry are that they are feeling:

- Hungry
- Like they need to be burped
- Gassy
- Tired
- Overstimulated (overexcited)
- They want to be held

TIPS

- Learn to recognize why your baby is crying. That is the first step to calming a fussy baby
- Help your partner out with housework or grocery shopping.
- Set aside 15 minutes a day to talk to your partner. Communication is important.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Learn infant feeding cues (see Week 2 in Breastfeeding “How Do I Know When My Baby is Hungry?”) so you can recognize when your baby is crying because she is hungry.
- Burp the baby at the end of each feeding.
- Gently massage the baby’s tummy to alleviate gas. Massage the tummy in a circular motion or lay the baby down on their back and move their legs like riding a bicycle.
- If the baby is tired, it is time for a nap. Swaddling, rocking, and playing white noise are good ways of soothing the baby to sleep. Always lay the baby down on his/her back for naptime and at night. Keep any loose bedding, soft objects or toys out of the baby’s sleep area.
- Too much noise and activity can overexcite the baby. Make sure the baby has a quiet place to go when there is a lot going on.



HELP YOUR PARTNER AND COMMUNICATE WITH HER

For the first three months, moms are usually the primary caretaker, especially if they are breastfeeding. You may feel like there is nothing you can do to help, but your help is always needed and appreciated. Helping your partner will not just alleviate some of her stress and exhaustion, it can also help maintain a healthy relationship. Below are some things you can do to care for your baby and the mother of your baby.

- Change the baby's diaper. This is not just mom's job! It may be a bit scary at first because the baby is so small but after a few times it gets easier
- Hold the baby skin-to-skin by holding them on your bare chest while they are wearing only a diaper. Skin-to-skin will help calm and soothe the baby
- Help with chores like preparing meals and doing laundry
- Offer to run errands like shopping for groceries and diapers
- Watch the baby while mom naps, showers, or gets out of the house for a while.
- Help mom stay healthy--make sure you have healthy food at home and prepare healthy meals for her
- Support her with breastfeeding--it can be really difficult. Wash the baby's burp cloths and help her store milk if she is pumping. You can also help out by washing the breast pump parts.

COMMUNICATION. In addition to helping out, good communication between you and your partner is important with a new baby at home. Parenthood does not mark the end of your life as a couple.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN KEEP YOUR COMMUNICATION ON TRACK:

- Set aside 15 minutes a day to talk. Your partner is home with the baby all day while you are at work, she will appreciate having a conversation with you.
- Go on dates. It can be something as simple as walking around the park or going out to dinner. Don't be afraid to ask friends and family for help with baby-sitting.
- Talk openly with your partner about your expectations for sex. Depending on whether she delivered vaginally or via C-section, doctors can approve sex 6-8 weeks postpartum. However, this does not mean she is ready emotionally. Discuss with your partner when you will resume sex and how you will go about it. It is important to plan. You can play a big role in encouraging her to use birth control.



FIND HEALTHY WAYS TO MANAGE YOUR STRESS

Stress is an unavoidable part of becoming a parent. Having a baby at home means less sleep

and more work but it also means more love. Mom will likely dedicate most of her time to the baby for some time and you may have to take on all household responsibilities for a few weeks until you find balance as a family. You may be even more stressed because you are back at work.

TRY THE FOLLOWING TIPS WHEN YOU FEEL STRESSED:

- Take deep breaths when you get frustrated.
- Take a 10 minute walk with mom and the baby when you get home from work

- Eat well and encourage mom to do the same. Poor nutrition can sap your energy level and increase stress. Our Nutrition lessons offer great tips on eating healthy!
- Coming home from work to do chores is stressful. Think of ways to minimize your chores. You can use paper cups and plates to minimize dish washing.
- Laugh! Watch your favorite comedy show or movie.

Becoming a dad is filled with new and exciting challenges. Remember that what matters is the journey, not the destination.

RESOURCES:

THE HAPPIEST BABY ON THE BLOCK

happiestbaby.com

DAD'S ADVENTURE

<http://www.dadsadventure.com/>

THE ART OF MANLINESS- NEW DAD SURVIVAL GUIDE

<http://www.artofmanliness.com/2013/12/11/new-dad-survival-guide-the-skillset/>

VIDEO:

HAPPIEST BABY ON THE BLOCK YOUTUBE CHANNEL

<https://www.youtube.com/user/thehappiestbaby/videos>

GETTING BABY TO SLEEP

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I21kbipjCBs>

APPS:

WEBMD BABY: FEEDING, NURSING, DIAPER, SLEEP, AND GROWTH TRACKER FOR INFANTS

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/webmd-baby-feeding-nursing/id489673347?mt=8>

USING INFANT MASSAGE TO RELIEVE COLIC

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmUZd89comQ>

NEWBORN BURPING TECHNIQUES

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m50PTFmmlxw>

BABY SHUSHER: TECHNIQUES TO HELP SOOTHE YOUR FUSSY CHILD

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/baby-shusher/id419606496?mt=8>