

Working Together as a Family

Whether this is your very first baby, or you have done it all before, bringing a new baby home means change. Every baby is different and will bring a new dynamic to your growing family. To help make these first days and nights go smoothly for everyone, work together as a family.

Although it may seem like mom has the biggest job to do, dads and partners have an important role as well. You are equal partners in raising a new human being and your role is important to both your baby and her mom.

Skin to skin contact with your baby in the first days and weeks is important for both mom and dad. Through regular skin to skin contact, dads and partners can help increase the bond they share with a new baby, and at the same time establish baby's sense of well-being, safety and love.

If mom is breastfeeding, dads and partners can be an active supporter of her efforts. Bring the baby to mom when he needs feeding. Bring a drink of water to mom while she is feeding. Moms get very thirsty while breastfeeding. And burp your baby after a feeding. Eventually mom may decide to begin pumping and storing breastmilk. This should only be done when her milk supply is well established, but when this happens, dads and partners can step in and begin to bottle-feed. It is actually easier to get a baby to take a bottle if it is not coming from mom. Let mom get some rest instead.

Another way to be helpful and supportive is to diaper and dress your newborn. This is another great time to bond with baby. During those late-night crying sessions, you can be the one to comfort and cuddle with your baby. Rock your baby, sing a song, gently soothe your baby back to sleep.

You can also support mom by taking care of the other children in the home and doing some of the chores around the house. Cooking, cleaning, shopping and laundry are great duties to share as a family.

If possible, be available to go to any healthcare appointments. You can carry the baby, drive to the appointment, and listen and ask questions during the appointment. Working together as a team can relieve some of the stress getting to and from a healthcare appointment can bring.

Everyone in a household has a new role to play when a new baby comes home, including other children. Spend time with the other children in your home. They may be missing mom or feeling left out or replaced with a new baby around and may need a little extra love and attention. Teach them to be loving siblings and help them bond with the new baby too.

Dads and partners, this is also a time to be emotionally supportive to mom. Let her know what a great job she is doing. And keep in mind that during the postpartum period her hormones are changing. She may be more emotional than usual. This is sometimes called the 'Baby Blues'.

For most new moms, the baby blues decrease with time and sleep, and disappear within a few weeks. But if you notice these feelings continue, mom may have postpartum depression. Look for excessive worrying or crying, extreme changes in appetite, the inability to sleep, and the inability to care for baby or herself.

If you notice any of these symptoms talk to your partner. Ask her how you can help. Get her the additional support she may need and if necessary, encourage her to seek professional help. In some cases, medication may be prescribed.

Working Together as a Family

Through all of the emotional and physical changes going on in your household when a new baby comes home, remember, dads and partners are not a back-up parent. Even in the early days, you have a very important role to fill in the home that is important to both baby and mom. Work together as a family and get to know your baby together.