

Tips for the First Few Weeks

Even with help, taking care of a newborn really turns your life upside down. So, you might want to consider these helpful tips. They'll make it easier for you to focus on the joy your baby brings to your life, while coping with the rest one day at a time.

Take care of yourself.

Eat healthy foods (try to go easy on caffeine) and drink plenty of water, especially if you are nursing. Get some fresh air every day, and try and do something you enjoy every day (even if it's just for a short period of time between feedings!), either with your baby or on your own.

Get as much rest as possible.

Even though you'll probably find it hard, try and sleep when your baby sleeps. If you have help at home, try to work out a nighttime schedule that allows you to get as much rest as you can, so that you'll better be able to take care of your baby, and yourself. If you are nursing, consider pumping at times and having helpful family or friends give a bottle. Ten minutes of pumping, versus forty-five minutes of nursing goes a long way towards good sleep.

Establish visiting hours.

A newborn usually brings friends and family out of the woodwork, and visitors can be really exhausting. Let them know what time works best, and ask anyone who's sick (or has a sick child) to stay home. You might also want to work out a signal with your partner or friend to let them know when you're ready for guests to leave. Let someone else be in charge of scheduling visits.

Go with the flow.

Let your baby set the pace in those first few weeks (you can worry about establishing a routine later). Allow plenty of time each day for feeding sessions, naps, and crying spells. If possible, keep plans to a minimum, and when you need to head out, give yourself lots of extra time. In the beginning, it will feel like it takes an hour just to get out the door, and it probably will!

Expect a roller coaster of emotions.

You may go from adoring your baby and his perfect little fingers and toes to feeling sad about your loss of independence and worrying that you may have made the wrong decision—all in the span of a single diaper change! This is totally normal. A newborn is a huge adjustment, and it doesn't help that you're the most sleep deprived you've ever been and your hormones are on a roller coaster ride.

Share your feelings.

Chances are you (and your partner) will be tired, stressed, and anxious. Talking about what's bothering you can help you feel connected to others. Remember, this is a major adjustment for everyone!

Get out of the house.

If you're going stir-crazy with a fussy baby, take them out for a walk. Call a friend and get them to join you. If you can, let someone else take over for a while.

Accept a helping hand.

When friends and loved ones offer to help, take them up on it. Suggest running a few errands, bringing over some lunch—whatever would help you out the most.

Keep your perspective.

Newborn days don't last long. Try and step back and appreciate the moments you have with your baby, even amid the chaos.

Know when to seek additional help.

Parenting a newborn can be stressful, even on a good day. But, there's a difference between baby blues (which are common and totally normal), and postpartum depression. Baby blues usually occur right after delivery and last no longer than about two weeks. The symptoms generally won't feel devastating, will come and go, and won't impact your day-to-day activities and enjoyment of your baby. Postpartum depression, on the other hand, feels much heavier with symptoms like loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping or staying asleep, loss of interest in your

newborn and in day-to-day activities. These symptoms may not start right after delivery, but will last much longer than two weeks.

If you ever have even the slightest feeling that this might be happening you, don't hesitate to consult your pediatrician or obgyn. They see and treat postpartum depression and other mood and anxiety disorders all the time and can help you make a plan. You can also contact Postpartum Support International (PSI) at 1-800-944-4PPD (4773) or www.postpartum.net/Get-Help. In a crisis or emergency situation, call or 911 visit your closest emergency room.