

Helpful hints for parents in the first few weeks

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Remember, the information on this fact sheet should not be used or relied on as an alternative to professional care. If you have a particular problem, see your health care professional.

The first few weeks are a time for getting to know your baby.

- This is a time of change, and of adjusting to these changes.
- It can be a time of mixed emotions that can change from hour to hour.
- There can be a workload that has no start or finish.

This can be one of the happiest times of your life, but it will also give you moments of despair.

Trust yourself

- You will get a lot of advice. Don't assume this advice will be right for you, your baby or your situation. Making your own decision can be an important step towards solving a problem.

Allow yourself time to enjoy your baby

- Babies need cuddling - it shows them the world is safe, secure and calming, and these precious moments can do wonders for your energy levels.

Allow yourself time to yourself without feeling guilty

Get out of the house regularly even for a short walk or sit in the garden or a park.

Try to do only basic household chores

Accept offers of help from friends, family and visitors, and be clear about what you want them to do for you.

There is information in the topic 'New mums' than might be helpful.

Partners

Your life has changed a lot too.

- Share household chores and baby care.
- Even if you are working, give yourself time with your baby.
- Plan time as a couple without the baby.

There is more information in the topic 'Being a dad'

Breastfeeding

- During the first few days at home your milk supply may appear to lessen and your baby might demand more often. You may start to feel that having a baby at the breast will be a permanent state. Don't worry, this will change.
- Demand feed your baby – feed when your baby wants to feed - remember that your new baby will need at least 6 to 8 feeds in 24 hours (and sometimes even more – up to 12 feeds a day).

- Short frequent feeds will stimulate your breasts and increase your milk supply.
- A daily rest may be helpful.
- Remember that if you are breastfeeding you are using up energy to produce milk. Aim for three balanced meals a day, and have a ready supply of nutritious snacks – fruit, sandwiches, healthy drinks).

Toddlers and older children

- They will need to know that you still love them
- Try to keep their routines going.
- Keep a special time with them, on their own, at least once a day.
- Before settling down to feed a baby, make sure that you have a book or toy, and a drink handy for your toddler.

Emotions

Having a new baby who is often distressed (all babies cry some of the time), having too much to do, and getting broken sleep means that all mothers have times when they feel low. Sometimes rest, a break from your baby, and someone to talk with – maybe friends, family and other new parents - can be very helpful.

Some women do find that they feel low much of the time.



An Australian Government Initiative

For more information on this topic or any issues related to pregnancy, birth or babies, call the free 24 hour helpline:

1800 882 436



Resources

- Parent Line in your state or territory
- Your local doctor
- Australian Breastfeeding Association:
1800 686 2 686
<http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/>
- Parenting groups

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