

ESPECIALLY FOR GRANDPARENTS



Postpartum Parent Support Program

Information

After the birth of a baby, the whole family, including the grandparents, experience many adjustments. The new parents are fatigued by the labour and birth experience. The new mother has the added strain of her body returning to its pre-pregnant state. Care of the new baby, besides being an additional work load, interrupts the family's normal sleep patterns and daily routines.

As a new grandparent, you can help by being positive and supportive, by giving special attention to the other grandchildren, and by helping with household chores such as meals, shopping, laundry and cleaning. You may also help by caring for the baby while the mother goes out for a while or takes a nap.

If you have a job, live far away or are in poor health and cannot perform these tasks yourself, you may help by keeping in close touch with the family or giving a helpful baby gift such as diaper service or cleaning services.

Sibling Rivalry

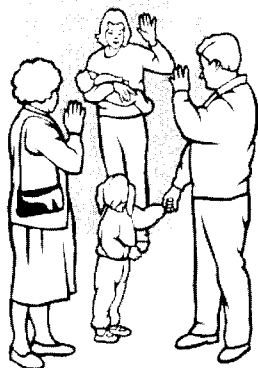
Often, other children in the family see the birth of a new baby as threatening to them. Children sometimes feel that they have lost their parents' love now that their mother and father are busy and tired from the increased activities of caring for a newborn. Normal responses at this time include acting like a baby and periods of jealous behaviour. You, and other relatives and friends, can help to reassure the children that they are still loved by:

- Bringing small gifts or treats.
- Cuddling, being as happy to see them as you are the newborn.
- Taking them on a special outing, a walk in the park, lunch at a special place, a movie.

Postpartum Adjustment

As you may recall, bringing home a new baby is not only a time of joy but also a time of fatigue, stress and uncertainty. A new mother experiences many physical and psychological changes including feelings of isolation. Fathers also go through a postpartum adjustment and emotional upheaval.

The latest findings suggest that the blues or periods of tearfulness after a birth may occur in four out of five mothers. Blues can take the form of prolonged or frequent crying spells, over-sensitivity to comments, and misinterpreting suggestions as criticisms.



You can help by:

- Letting the new mother tell you how she is feeling and what you can do to help.
- Understanding her feelings.
- Accepting the fact that she does not feel like herself.
- Assuring her that many others have felt just the same.
- Telling her that you love her.
- Helping her get more rest.
- If the feelings of depression persist, urge her to see her physician.

NOTE: see the Postpartum Adjustment information sheet for more details.

Giving Advice

Newborn babies seem to bring out the advice-giver in all kinds of people. We all have our own way of doing things and, while your experience is valuable to you, it may not be useful to or appreciated by someone else. If asked, share your knowledge in a factual way, but do encourage parents to make their own decisions.

Remember that many new parents feel insecure with their new duties and responsibilities. One real problem that they encounter is the quantity of information that they receive. Because it is often contradictory, it places new parents in the impossible situation of having to choose just what advice to accept and, therefore in the process, of trying not to hurt the people they love (and whose advice they have rejected).

When you spend time with the new parents and family, you will probably find some other ways to help them. While this sheet does recommend some specific things to do, your love, caring and understanding are the best gifts of all.

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