



Education

New Parent: Father

For many men, nothing in their lives equals the thrill of watching their babies being born. Becoming a father is a big event. Showing your baby love and affection through holding, cuddling, playing, and diaper changing helps your baby feel secure and important to you.

Babies learn about the world through their senses. The sense of touch is probably the most developed sense that babies have. Holding your baby gently but firmly helps them feel secure. You may worry that babies are fragile or that you will drop them. Do not let your fears keep you from enjoying your baby. Close contact with your baby lets them know and trust you.

Taking care of a new baby is a learning experience for both mother and father. Because new mothers get so much attention, fathers may feel left out. Remember, a father is as important to a baby's development as is the mother.

Here are some ideas that may help you as a new father:

- If the baby is breast-fed, bring the baby to the mother at feeding time whenever possible. Change the baby's diaper either before or after the feeding session. Bring the baby's mother a cool drink or help in another way. She needs and will appreciate your support.
- If the baby is bottle-fed, arrange to do one or more feedings a day. Holding the baby, talking to your baby, and making eye contact increases the attachment you feel for your child.
- Recognize that there will be changes in your household and your life. Take over some chores at home so the baby's mother can devote more of her time to caring for the baby.
- Arrange a few days to give your new family time together. You may want to do this right after mom and baby get home from the hospital. Make sure there are enough supplies in the house to last for a few days: food, diapers, and baby needs. Let family and friends know you are resting and will welcome their visits in a few days.

If you feel frustrated, angry, or otherwise unable to take care of yourself or the baby's mother, talking with a trusted relative, an experienced father, a counselor, or your health care provider can help. If you feel frustrated enough to shake or hit your baby, stop and take a quiet break to calm yourself. Be sure to talk with someone about your feelings.

It is normal to feel challenged by your new responsibilities as a father. However, it can be one of the most rewarding and enjoyable experiences of your life.

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