

## WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF PARENTING

Your baby is finally here.  
***Congratulations!***

### **NEWBORNS ARE DELIGHTFUL—AND TIRING**

- Newborns may sleep only a few hours at a time.
- A newborn's ability to hear, see, smell, and feel grows every day.
- Parents can help crying babies calm down by making them feel warm, close, and comfortable—just like it was in the womb.
- Since all parents can get upset from crying babies, it's important to know when and who to ask for help.
- Friends and family can share the delight and the work of caring for newborns.

### **BABY'S SLEEP AND MOTHER'S REST**

Newborns usually sleep 16 to 17 hours a day, but they may sleep for only a couple hours at a time.

- Many babies wake up every 2 to 4 hours, day or night.
- New mothers need plenty of rest after childbirth to get their strength and energy back.
- Mother and baby can take a nap at the same time.
- As the new father supports mom during her recovery, he can enjoy getting to know this new addition to the family!



### **INFORMATION FOR DADS**

#### **It's a new life for you.**

Your role as a father will bring about some big changes in your life. The physical, emotional, and financial demands of being a dad can cause stress. You also may feel a little left out during the first few weeks, since much of the attention is on your new baby and the mom. By becoming actively involved with your new baby, feelings of stress and being left out will decrease. You will begin to

- Enjoy the pleasure of being a dad.
- Strengthen your relationship with your baby's mother.
- Contribute to the well-being of your baby.

#### **Ways for you to be involved.**

Your baby already knows who you are from hearing your voice before birth.

- As you hold your baby in your arms, enjoy the feeling of your baby cuddling up to you.
- Have fun as you spend time talking to your new baby.
- If you have older children, they will need your support now while their mother is tired and focused on the new baby.

## **WHEN YOUR BABY CRIES A LOT**

Sometimes we just don't know why babies are crying! So, what can you do? Think about what it was like when your baby was in the womb, and try to create a similar experience.

- **Calmly hold** your baby close to your shoulder or chest—inside the womb, it was warm and close.
- **Swaddle** (wrap) your baby in a blanket—toward the end of pregnancy, it was very crowded.
- **Quietly sing or talk** to your baby, softly play calm music—voices heard through the womb were very comforting.
- **Gently rock** your baby or go for a quiet walk—before birth, your baby was used to quietly floating.

There will be a few times when babies will continue to cry until either sleep finally arrives or they become quiet yet alert.

Comforting babies when they cry does not spoil them. In fact, many babies learn how to calm themselves just by knowing that someone will calm them.

Sometimes, babies will continue to fuss after parents have tried everything! They are crying because they have had all the excitement that they can handle for now. This is when it's best to **quietly hold your baby, or put your baby in a safe place, like the crib, and wait until all is calm.**

## **CRYING BABIES UPSET THEIR PARENTS**

All parents get upset when their baby cries. With all this crying, try to stay patient. Your baby can sense when you are upset or tense.

After trying all the ways that usually calm your baby, it's OK to let your baby cry. It's OK to place your baby, faceup, in the crib to calm down. It's OK to let your baby cry sometimes and give yourself time to calm down. Do something that you enjoy and find calming—have a cup of tea or coffee, listen to music, call a friend or spouse, read, or meditate. These feelings of stress are natural and will pass.

If your baby's crying is getting to be too much—and it does get to this point for many parents—reach out for help. Talk with a friend or relative who has been through this, or call your pediatrician.

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***Never yell at, hit, or shake your baby!***

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## **INFORMATION FOR NEW MOMS**

Becoming a parent brings big changes to your life—more than you might have imagined!

### **You may feel tired much of the time.**

Your body is recovering from pregnancy and childbirth. At times, you may wonder if you will be able to make it through the first month. This is common and normal. Let family and friends help out with meals, shopping, cleaning, and if you have other children, taking care of them. Don't feel that you need to entertain visitors as well!

### **You may have wild mood swings.**

As your body begins to adjust, you may go from great highs to hopeless lows. This is common during the first weeks after giving birth, but please let people know if you feel down or overwhelmed.

Your feelings deserve attention and support from your family and friends, and from your doctors. If you think you need help, ask for it. Taking care of your emotional and physical health also helps your baby.

**You may feel lonely.**

Some of your links to family and friends will get stronger, while others may get weaker. Some people will understand what you are going through, and others won't. Your baby needs and will demand much of your attention, time, and energy. If you are a mom who also works outside of the home, chances are you are not seeing friends from work at this time. Try reaching out to family and friends, or find other new mothers who live near you.

**BABY BEHAVIOR**

Most babies are born able to hear, see, smell, and feel the people and objects that are near them. When your baby is awake, you will notice how the ability to follow people and sounds grows every day.

After a few weeks, babies can stay awake longer. They begin to do everything longer, including fussing and crying. By the time babies are 1 month old, many will cry for 2 or more hours every day. This is completely normal. Between ages 2 and 4 months, most babies will start to cry a lot less—as little as 1 hour for the whole day.

Babies cry the most from ages 2 to 10 weeks.

Babies love the people who care for them. Don't take your baby's crying personally. Babies cry mainly because they are

- Tired
- Hungry
- Hot or cold
- In need of a diaper change
- Overstimulated

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