

How to Help Dad Feel Connected When New Baby Comes



Congratulations, baby makes three! Family and friends gather around to celebrate, mom and baby receive gifts and attention while dad is sometimes left out. Dad needs the chance to be involved and to have opportunities to bond with his baby as well. How can dad share the joy and the work of this new bundle of love?

Keep reading for some tips to help dads feel involved and connected with their newborn.

1. Start before the baby is born. When you find out you are pregnant you can simply say, "we are pregnant." Yes, mom facilitates the growth and development of the baby- her body is the one that changes but dad made a significant contribution to the wondrous event. Mom and dad can both be involved in planning for the baby- what color for the baby's room, etc. Dad can be included in the baby shower or have a new dad party such as golfing with his buddies and dad can make positive health choices just like mom.
2. In the hospital, dad needs the chance to kangaroo care the newborn also. Kangaroo care involves placing the

baby on mom or dad's bare chest. This happens naturally if mom breast feeds, but dad needs time to bond with the baby also. Once home, don't just relegate dad to diaper changing duty as his only time to be with the baby. Let dad be involved in feeding. "Once nursing is established, when your baby is about 4 weeks old, you both may want to introduce a pumped bottle so that dad can feed the baby (and mom can get some more sleep), ...baby may resist initially, so keep the pumped bottle a consistent part of the evening routine." (Stewart, 2015)

3. Plan for, and ask for, Paternity leave giving new dad time off from work to spend with baby and practice his skills comforting and caring for the baby.
4. Allow each parent to learn how to soothe baby in his or her way. Mom has motherly instincts, dad has fatherly instincts as well. As long as parent and baby aren't in danger, give each other the opportunity to figure out how to soothe, diaper, and feed the baby in their own way.

If you both made the effort to learn all you can through studying books, attending new baby and parenting classes, or other quality information, you can feel confident that you both are capable of caring for your new addition together.

References

Stewart, R. (2015 September) Let Dad Be Dad: 6 Ways to Encourage New Fathers. WebMD <https://www.webmd.com/parenting/baby/features/let-dad-be-dad>

Sax, L. MD, PhD 2016. The Collapse of Parenting

Sandler, E. (2015, July) Post-Baby Mental Health, For Dads. Psychology Today <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/promoting-hope-preventing-suicide/201507/post-baby-mental-health-dads>.

By Catherine Hansen, USU Extension Assistant Professor