

# DADS

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Children, men and women are different and so are their needs. In an environment friendly to men, the Nanaimo Men's Resource Centre offers information, workshops, support groups, individual counseling and referrals to existing community services. We promote safe and clear communication, healthy fathering and strong family relationships.

The Nanaimo Men's Resource Centre promotes the integrity of the family and the rights of men, women and children. We advocate shared parenting within the family and equal access to children after separation and divorce.

Social services in the community often focus on the needs of women and mothers. We recognize that men are equally affected by family crisis & often need help to maintain healthy connections with their children.

Please visit our website: [www.nanaimomen.com](http://www.nanaimomen.com) and check out our Dads section!

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# DADS

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**Resource Material For Dads**  
TOGETHER WE ARE GREATER

# DADS

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

This booklet is dedicated to men and their families in the best interest of their children



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## OTHER RESOURCES

Dads Make a Difference is modeled (with permission) on a program with the same name developed by Gardner Wiseheart in San Angelo, Texas. For details of this program, which has been running for more than fifteen years, go to <http://www.hfsatx.com>

Triple P Parenting: Check for local upcoming courses at [www.triplepvp.ca](http://www.triplepvp.ca).

123 Magic: VHS video - Lending library at the Nanaimo Men's Resource Centre.

## REFERENCE LIST

1. Pages 6,7 adapted and condensed, with permission, from material by Gardner Wiseheart <http://www.hfsatx.com/>
2. Page 8 reprinted with permission from an article by Gardner Wiseheart <http://www.hfsatx.com/>
3. Page 9 adapted with permission from Kyle D. Pruett "Fatherhood: Why Father Care Is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child" 2000
4. Pages 12,13 reprinted with permission of Mike Farrel [www.fatherhood.about.com/cs/newdads/a/new\\_dad\\_sleep.htm](http://www.fatherhood.about.com/cs/newdads/a/new_dad_sleep.htm)
5. Pages 14,15 from "Play and Your Baby: Birth to Six Months," [www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile92c.stm](http://www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile92c.stm)
6. Pages 16,17 from "Play and Your Toddler: Six Months to Three Years," [www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile92d.stm](http://www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile92d.stm)
7. Page 19 Health Link BC on breastfeeding and formula feeding  
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<http://healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/pdf/hfile69b.pdf>
8. Pages 20, 21 BC Health Guide summarized from [www.bchealthguide.org/kbase/topic/mini/hw169815/overview.htm](http://www.bchealthguide.org/kbase/topic/mini/hw169815/overview.htm)
9. Page 23, When to Call the Baby's Doctor, from Robin Elise Weiss, LCCE from <http://pregnancy.about.com/od/newbornbabies/qt/whentocallped.htm>



## CONCLUSION

*If you have read through this booklet, you have learned how important you are, as an involved dad, to your child. You should also have some of the information you need about your child's development and safety to start the process of becoming an effective father. Learning never stops! For more help with fathering, read some of the resources in the reading list, and seek out support from programs like Dads Make a Difference at the Nanaimo Men's Resource Centre. You have our very best wishes for your success in one of life's most rewarding experiences.*

## SUGGESTED READING LIST

- A Fine Young Man** - M Gurian, 1998
- Boys and Girls Learn Differently** - M Gurian, 2001
- Boys Will Be Men** - Paul Kivel, 1996
- Boy Smarts** - Barry Macdonald, 2005
- Father and Child Reunion** - Warren Farrell, 2001
- Fathering Right from the Start** - Jack Heinowitz, 2001
- From Boys to Men** - M Gurian, 1999
- Hold on to Your Kids** - Gabor Mate/Gordon Neufeld, 2004
- Iron John** - R Bly, 1990
- Real Boys** - WS Pollack, 1998
- The Good Son** - M Gurian, 1999
- The Roots of Empathy** - Mary Gordon, 2005
- The Sibling Society** - Robert Bly, 1996
- The Wonder of Boys** - M Gurian, 1996
- The Wonder of Girls** - M Gurian, 2002
- Why Gender Matters** - Leonard Sax, 2005
- Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say** - Warren Farrell, 1999
- Baby's Best Chance** - Province of British Columbia - Ministry of Health, 2006  
Available at your local health unit or on the internet at:  
[www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2005/babybestchance.pdf](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2005/babybestchance.pdf)
- Toddlers First Steps** - Province of British Columbia - Ministry of Health, 2008  
Available at your local health unit or on the internet at:  
[www.hls.gov.bc.ca/children/initiatives/toddler.html](http://www.hls.gov.bc.ca/children/initiatives/toddler.html)

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## WELCOME DADS

This booklet was produced by the Nanaimo Men’s Resource Centre to provide material helping new fathers learn more about effective parenting. The articles have been selected to give a brief overview, and are drawn from extensive on-line material. We heartily encourage fathers to “learn by doing” while continuing the ongoing parenting process. Welcome to the world of parenting - Dads Make a Difference!

When a new baby makes its appearance in a family, events arise which seem to fit the phrase “crisis is opportunity”. Unlimited opportunities exist where you can introduce your baby to the world of becoming aware of aptitudes and skills. Working together with your partner you will find the resources to meet the challenges.

### Just Start!

You may be nervous as a new Dad. Those Dads who have been through this before say “just start” and you’ll soon get the hang of it! Don’t hold back for fear of over or under parenting. This is definitely an on-the-job training experience!

### Reach Out

There are a number of local and on-line resources for Dads. Community organizations such as the Nanaimo Men’s Resource Centre provide support for men and their families with individual counseling, group sessions and workshops, such as *Dads Make a Difference*, and *Calming Your Anger*.



*“I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father’s protection.”*

-Sigmund Freud

## WHEN TO CALL THE BABY’S DOCTOR

Knowing when to call your family doctor can be a tricky thing for new parents. You’re worried, but you don’t want to seem like a frantic new parent.

### When considering contacting your family doctor decide:

- Can this call wait until the office is open?
- Is this an urgent question or problem that needs to be addressed immediately?
- Should I call 911 rather than my family doctor?
- Can this question wait until the next visit?

### Some reasons to call your family doctor now:

- Your baby is 3 months of age or younger and has a temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or higher
- Your baby is 3 – 6 months old and has a fever of 40°C (104°F) or higher
- Your baby becomes yellow looking
- Crying hysterically
- Difficulty awakening your child

- Loss of consciousness
- Seizures
- If your baby's lips or nails become pale or bluish in colour

### When to call 911:

- Difficulty breathing
- Profuse bleeding
- Baby is unresponsive



Information from Robin Elise Weiss, LCCE from pregnancy.about.com

## LIFE SAVING TIPS

### Toxic Products

Keep toxic products out of your baby's reach. This includes medicines, cleaning products, cigarettes and alcohol. Keep these products in their original containers and preferably in a locked cabinet. Immediately call the Poison Control Center or 911 if you suspect your child has swallowed or inhaled a toxic product.

### Cooking

While cooking turn pot handles to the centre of the stove.

### High chairs

Ensure chairs are secure and monitored.

### String

Any cord or string longer than 12" can be dangerous.

### Shopping

Never leave children in the car while you dash into the store.

### Diapering

Never leave your baby on a change table or in a bathtub while you get supplies.

### Sleeping

Research has shown that the

safest position for babies to sleep is on their back.

### Table

Avoid using tablecloths or large place mats. A child can pull on them and overturn a hot drink or plate of food.

### Bottles

Don't warm baby bottles full of milk in the microwave oven. The liquid heats unevenly, resulting in some of the milk being so hot that it can scald your baby's mouth.

### Toys

Don't buy vending machine toys for small children; they do not have to meet safety regulations and often contain small parts. Check toys in the house frequently for loose or broken parts - for example, a stuffed animal's loose eye. Warn older children not to leave loose game parts or toys with small pieces in easy reach of younger siblings.



### Support Your Partner

You will both need a lot of patience and encouragement. Your relationship will change in unexpected ways. Stay Alert!

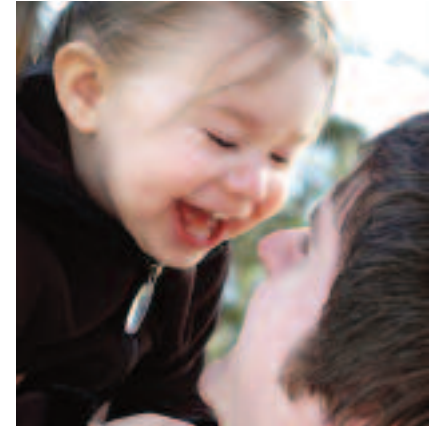
### Stages of Connection

Mom had nine months of maternal bonding. This provides her with an immediate and necessary connection to the baby. Dad bonds with baby consciously by interacting in a responsible way. The sound of your voice, your eye contact and your touch is all you need - these will create lasting bonds. Be patient as the process develops.



### WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS

Healthy, informed, and consistent parents - Your baby needs you, so take care of yourselves. Get rest when you can, and look for support and accurate information. Be both flexible and firm in your parenting.



### Touch and Contact

One way babies communicate is by touch. Lots of skin contact and gentle massage helps you connect with your baby. All physical and emotional contact is important, such as changing diapers, feeding, playing and teaching. Show your love in every way you can.

### Physical Needs

Your baby needs to be safe, warm, fed, dry, and clean; just like you!

### Stimulation

Read to your child, encourage lots of new challenges, and provide a variety of activities that will stimulate all baby's senses.



## INVOLVED FATHERING The Opportunity Ahead!

Like any career, fathering does have some learning curves. It's good to know ahead of time what some of the potential challenges are.

### Lack of Role Model

Many men did not have involved or informed fathers in their lives, so looking to extended family members, peers in parenting, and support groups is a healthy solution. Reach out to your partner and your children for their help in parenting. Fortunately there is a growing base of online and printed support material available.

### Primary Caregiver

The fact is both of you are equally capable of parenting effectively. Mom may need to loosen up a bit and let you learn on the job, just as she does. You can rise to the occasion, navigate beyond your comfort zone and enter a new and wondrous world.

### Workplace

A growing group of aware employers realize that healthy and happy employees are their greatest asset. Safety issues are

a major reason for Dad to have a clear mind and not be worried that he is absent during important family matters. Advise your boss that there will be times when you will need to leave work for family matters. Meanwhile, be creative, find alternate ways to stay connected.



### Parenting Styles

There are many parenting styles. Choose your path carefully and learn about the results of each style. There are many parenting programs around. Some very effective programs are *PPP* (Triple P Parenting), *The Dads Make a Difference* mentoring program, and *123 Magic* support material. See the reading list at the end of this booklet.

### What can you do to prevent yourself from becoming overwhelmed?

- Learn about child development, child health, effective and safe behaviour management. This information can help you understand and deal with your baby's behaviour and changing needs. Call your local health unit for information about parenting education classes or look for books in your local library.
- Talk with other parents about the ways they cope with the demands of child care.
- Take short relaxation breaks when you can, such as listening to your favourite music while your baby naps.
- Ask for help when you need time for yourself. Ask trusted friends or family members to take care of your baby, or trade a few hours of occasional babysitting with a friend who has a child. If you do not have this kind of support, contact your health professional or local health unit for community organizations that can help you.

- The average baby cries from 1 to 5 hours out of every 24 during their first few months of life. Sometimes a crying spell can last between 15 minutes to an hour for no obvious reason. Crying peaks around 6 weeks, then gradually decreases.
- Recognize the danger signs. Put your baby in a safe place, such as a crib and go into another room if you feel that you might lose control and hurt your baby. Call a friend or family member to come over and relieve you for a while. You can also call your doctor to discuss your feelings and get immediate help.



Get immediate help from a health professional if you have shaken your baby or if you are concerned that you might harm your baby.

*Adapted from BC Health Guide*



## YOUR BABY'S SAFETY

### Crying Babies

Babies need attention. Giving attention to a crying baby will not spoil her. It is a way for baby to tell you she needs feeding or cuddling or that she is sick or tired or frustrated.

Usually crying starts at about two weeks, peaks at about two months and lessens at about three or four months of age. Babies can cry as much as five or more hours a day, most usually around supper time and into the evening.

### What to Do About Crying?

Sometimes a baby just needs changing or feeding, cuddling or burping. Sometimes rocking, walking with or singing to the baby works. Also, check also to see if the baby is too hot or too cold.

Other things to try:

- Smile and make eye contact
- Give baby a back rub
- Take a warm bath with your baby

- Play soothing music
- Change baby's position
- Check room temperature
- Check for open diaper pins
- Take baby for a ride in the car

### When Crying is Frustrating?

Sometimes nothing seems to work and parents become very frustrated. Remember that crying will not hurt the baby. It's OK to take a break and relax for a while. Never shake a baby to get her to stop crying. This can cause very serious and possibly irreversible damage or death.

Before the baby's crying gets too stressful, ask your partner or a trusted relative or friend to help. If nothing seems to help and you are not sure the baby is well, check with your local health care practitioner or public health nurse.

## QUALITIES OF AN INVOLVED FATHER

### Responsible

Being an involved father means taking on more than you ever dreamed of. Keep up the good work! You are raising a new generation which will rid our parenting vocabulary of words such as "Shame" and "Blame" and add new and richer meanings to "Empowerment" and "Potential".

### Consistent and Flexible

Combining these two is one of the great mysteries of parenting.

### Affectionate and Enthusiastic

Show your love. Every father has his own way. Find your style, but make sure love doesn't go unexpressed. Children can't read minds or feel enthusiasm unless it is shown.

### Committed

This will come out in your relationship and the way you teach your child to follow through.

### Encouraging

A kind word goes a long way. Nothing is better than praise from a parent.

### Supportive

Your child's choices in music and hairstyles may not be yours, but your response will help build the relationship that weathers the winds of fashion and sets the tone for issues that actually matter. "I can talk to my Dad about anything" are words that make a father feel proud.

### Patient

Your family may not be operating at the same rhythm as the workplace. When you get home, take time to adjust to the pace at home. Ask your family for some transition time, and then you're all theirs!





## HOW CHILDREN WITH INVOLVED FATHERS BENEFIT

Research over the last several years investigating father-infant relationships and the influence of fathers in their children's lives has shown that babies whose fathers have been actively involved with them score higher on standardized developmental assessments (especially in the area of mental and motor development).

The more fathers were involved in the everyday repetitive aspects of care such as bathing, feeding, dressing, and diapering during the first eight weeks of their infant's life, the more socially responsive the babies were. Additionally, these same babies were better able to withstand stressful situations later during their school years.

In studies of premature infants, researchers found that early paternal involvement has a significant effect on lessening the long term vulnerability of these infants. Infants whose fathers are involved, cope better with strangers and demonstrate a lower degree of stress or anxiety.



Through the variety of maternal and paternal touch, play, and vocal patterns, infants learn to better deal with differing patterns of adult interaction, expectations, and styles.

*Researchers have demonstrated a connection between nurturing, involved fathers and higher academic performance in both boys and girls.*

### Feeding Time

For the first six months, all your baby needs is breast milk. At six months, solid food can be introduced. Breastfeeding should continue along with solid foods for two years and beyond.

Some babies may need to be fed with infant formula. If this is the case, please contact a public health nurse at your local health unit for information about formula preparation and feeding.

For more information about breastfeeding or formula feeding, please refer to the Health Line BC internet resources at the back of this booklet.

### Bath Time

Babies generally enjoy bath time and it's a good opportunity to make some essential emotional and physical contact. As you are bathing your baby talk and let them know what you are doing each step of the way. This makes it fun for you and baby.

#### *Sponge Bath*

If it is a simple wash use pieces

of cotton batten dipped in cooled boiled water then squeezed dry to wipe their eyes (from inside outward) behind the ears, over the face and around the neck. Clean your baby's hands, arms, body and legs the same way, using a new ball of cotton every time.

#### *The Big Bath*

Hold your baby in a little tub of lukewarm water, making sure the temperature is even. Never leave your baby unattended, even for one second. Use gentle soaps and baby products. With a soft cloth wash your baby's body gently while talking and making eye contact. Wipe around your baby's bottom using a downward motion from front to back. With a clean towel, dry all the skin creases, patting gently. Put baby in a clean diaper and dress appropriately and voilà - a happy Dad and a happy baby!





## YOUR FIRST TIME ALONE WITH THE BABY

Here are a few tips for handling your first solo flight.

### Checking in with Mom

Information is knowledge! And knowledge helps when making decisions about what to do next.

### Being Prepared

Stock up on everything you need and keep them handy.

- *Emergency and support phone numbers*
- *First Aid kit*
- *Baby schedule*
- *Breast milk or formula*
- *Clothes & diapers*
- *Toys*

*Be prepared and willing to learn!*

### Staying on time

Staying on time can help calm a stressed baby. Checking diapers, nap times and knowing when your baby should be fed next can help you be prepared in advance.

### Paying Attention!

Parenting is a job that needs your full attention. It's not a good idea at this time to plan for any other major projects. Distractions like TV, internet or novels can take your attention away from

your number one priority in the moment - your baby!

### Being Patient

Doing things with babies take time! Rushing can make you and the baby feel anxious. It's okay to take your time and feel confident that you are doing it right. Being in a hurry can cause more mistakes and delay the process further. Staying calm can eliminate frustration.



### Checklist for a crying baby...

- Diaper
- Hungry
- Tired
- Tummy Ache
- Wants Attention

Girls raised with involved, nurturing fathers display a greater sense of competency, especially in mathematics, and a secure sense of femininity, which leads toward appropriate and healthy relationships with boys and men during their teenage and adult years.

Boys raised with involved, nurturing fathers are at far less risk of being excessively aggressive, violent, or exhibiting other anti-social behaviors. Research has shown that fathers play a major role in helping their children develop a sense of their own competence, and independence outside the powerful intimacy of the mother-child relationship

The emotional, mental and social development of the child is greatly affected by a father who is actively involved in a nurturing and loving way.

How can father help with breast-feeding? The strongest and most powerful influence is your encouragement. If a man is involved in the daily physical care of his child during a significant period before the child reaches the age of 36 months, the probability that a man will be involved in the sexual abuse of his own or anyone else's children is dramatically reduced.



*Both boys and girls raised with involved fathers display a greater ability to take initiative and direct themselves. Studies reveal that even in high crime inner-city neighborhoods, well over 90% of children from safe, stable homes in which the father is present and involved do not become delinquents.*

*Adapted with permission of Gardner Wiseheart*

## HOW MOM AND DAD INTERACT WITH THEIR CHILDREN

### MOMS

- Tend to say "Watch out! Be careful!"
- Jump in quickly & try to make things go sensibly
- Mimic baby's sounds & talk to baby in "babytalk"
- Play more calmly & gently
- Tend to want to protect children from everything
- Talk softly and gently touch baby's skin
- Generally cuddle & coo with babies
- Pick up babies the same way each time
- Sit with baby & rock
- Comfort toddlers when they are hurt or scared
- Help heal cuts & scrapes when little ones get hurt
- Are a "safe place" to go when things in life get too rough
- Show how to play with toys as "expected"

### DADS

- Tend to say "Go for it! You can do it!"
- Encourage their child to figure things out
- Don't use "babytalk" as much
- Play more "rough & tumble"
- Encourage little ones to explore and discover
- Are a wonderful source of new and different sounds
- Stimulate baby's senses by showing them new things
- Pick up & carry babies differently each time
- Will get down on the floor with baby to get him/her to move
- Believe in bandaging quickly & continuing with play
- Are more likely to encourage a child to keep his "chin up" when the going gets rough
- Invent new things to do with toys

*These are generalizations and don't always apply to all families.*

*Reprinted with permission of Gardner Wiseheart*

### Toddlers Love to Travel

Around the block, to the garage, over to Grandma's, across the street, into the lumberyard, off to the beach - they are all adventures when you're young. Go on expeditions, collecting souvenirs as you go - coupons from the grocery store, a stir stick from the paint shop, a bus transfer, a wildflower, or a big shell.

### Toddlers Love to Explore

'Exploring' can be done in many ways and your toddler will be eager for them all. This can mean a trip to the woods to crawl around in old stumps, or a visit to the library to see where all the books are kept. Take them to the garage when you have your tires rotated, or to the bakery to see bread baking.

### Toddlers Love Talk

During the first year of life babies don't say too much, but they are listening and this is when the foundation for language is laid. Talk to them about everything! When your child babbles or talks to you, help them by talking back.

*Adapted from Play and Your Baby - BC HealthGuide*

### Toddlers Love to Help

Toddlers love to help. It's a big mistake to turn them away at this age, because if 'helping you' is a normal, happy thing for them to do, they will be more likely to be helpers at 10 or 12 or 15 years of age. Follow your child's lead and use your creative mind to find ways your child can help.



### Toddlers at Work

Children at play are really children at work. They are learning cause and effect, developing skills, and absorbing all the knowledge they will need to grow up and take on the world.



## PLAYING WITH YOUR CHILD (Toddlers)

### Toddlers Need Freedom and Safety

The best environment for a toddler is one that encourages them to explore freely and safely. Child-proof your home to make it a safe place where it is not necessary to say "No" very often.

### The Freedom to Play

Although there will be times when you 'organize' your child's play, most play should be spontaneous and unstructured by the parent. When toddlers have the freedom to do their own 'research' and the freedom to move at their own speed, they learn the most.

Parents are sometimes worried that their child doesn't play cooperatively with others. Cooperative play, however, is something that comes with time. A very young child will amuse themselves - this is called solitary play. Months later you'll see that they have engaged in parallel play - still doing their own thing, but playing next to another child who is also doing their own thing. Finally, at about age two or

so, they'll begin to play with others.

### Toddlers Love to Move

Toddlers love to move their big muscles, rolling and crawling and finally, walking, running and jumping. Make sure your crawling baby has lots of safe spaces to explore. To make the space safe use baby-proof latches on doors; lock up pills, cleaning products and poisons; put gates across the top and bottom of stairs; put plants out of reach; pad sharp corners and edges of furniture; cover electrical outlets and make book shelves stable. Get them outdoors for a walk/run as much as possible.

### Toddlers Love to Pretend

Collect old shoes, clothes, hats and handbags. Look out for flashy things like sequined blouses, shawls, satin fabrics, etc. Children also love dress-up clothes that reflect different jobs, like hard hats or bright yellow firefighter raincoats.

## 10 THINGS DADS TEND TO DO AND POSSIBLE RESULTS

### WHAT DADS DO

### RESULT

"Jump in" less quickly

Encourage child's ability to tolerate stress

Provide clear boundaries between self and others

Increase empathy and self-confidence

Show children to the world and the world to children

Encourage safe risk-taking

Balance gender

Give children access to variations and possibilities in relationships

Show a wide range of options

Give children a sense that the world is their oyster

Be a model of focus and determination

Can increase ability to concentrate

Demonstrate how men interact with other men

Encourage healthy interactions

Play more often

Encourage playfulness and reduce stress

Encourage new activities

Increase children's confidence in problem solving and adaptation

Give Mom a break and give the child a different set of survival life strategies

Increase resilience and ability to cope

*Adapted from Fatherneed: Why Father Care Is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child - with permission of Kyle Pruett, MD*



## HOW TO SUPPORT MOM

### Sleep

New mothers need a lot of extra sleep and care while their bodies recover. You can help Mom by bringing the baby to mom for breastfeeding. If you need to go to work check in with her during the day. If there are older children - take them out and give her a bit of a break.



### Mom's Health

When mom breastfeeds, encourage her. Tell her that you're proud of her and protect her from well meaning but negative comments about breastfeeding. Remind Mom to focus on her recovery and the new baby. Stay positive. Criticism can overwhelm her, especially at this delicate time. Don't judge or give advice - she has probably heard more than enough of that from others.

### Be There for Doctor's Visits

If possible, try and take time off work to go with Mom to the baby's doctor. You will feel closer to both Mom and your baby and have more information about health and developmental issues and topics. Encourage your employer to be "family friendly" and to permit your attendance at important events.

### Post Partum Depression

Learn the warning signs of post-partum depression and help her seek help if you see the situation is heading out of control.

### Other Ways to Help Mom

You can help with household tasks like cooking, laundry and shopping - take baby along - it's a great way to learn how Dad does things and interacts with people. Help Mom find community resources for any specific needs she has. Perform random acts of kindness - for example washing and cleaning her car. On a more personal level - who doesn't like a nice massage and to be fussed over?

### Babies Love to Touch

Babies learn through touch. Help them explore their world by giving them lots of different shapes and textures. Talk to them as they feel different things like 'smooth wood', 'rough sandpaper', 'soft fur', a 'squishy stuffed animal' and a 'hard plastic container'. Let them put different (safe and clean) things in their mouth - a knobby rubber toy, or a cold teething ring. Most babies love water and bath time. As they get older, add a few simple toys to the bath.

### Babies Love to Look

New babies love mobiles made with bright colours and different shapes. Make sure they look interesting from the baby's point of view, which is below the mobile. Put colourful pictures up where they can see them - near their crib, highchair, and beside the change table. Place a mirror where they can see themselves,

*Baby massage classes are a great chance to learn how babies like to be touched.*

either made of non-breakable baby-proof materials, or out of reach. Start their own personal picture book with colourful pictures that they will like including animals, other babies, and some photos of the important people in their life, including them! Babies love books for the pictures and for the sound of your voice reading. Babies love to watch you, so put their baby seat in a safe place (on the ground) where they can watch you. Talk to them while you work and they'll be happy watching.

### Babies Love Sound

Babies love music. Play the music you like to listen to and they will probably enjoy it too. Remember to keep the volume reasonable. Babies love the sound of singing, so sing to them. Babies like to make noise, so look for things they can grasp which make noise, like plastic keys or rattles or crib gyms with noisy features.

*Adapted from Play and Your Baby - BC HealthGuide*



## PLAYING WITH YOUR CHILD (0-6 Months)

As a parent, you are your baby's first playmate - the one who provides a safe place to explore, and who offers fun and interest. Babies come with built-in playthings - toes, fingers, hands, legs and feet. Babies are very social beings and they will love playing with you most of all. These early months of play are wonderful times to get to know your baby and build a loving relationship together.

### Babies Grow

The first six months of babies' lives are fascinating! They grow very fast and master new skills every day. First they find their fingers, then their toes. They start to reach for things and one day they close their fingers over it and realize that they can get what they want by themselves! They rock from side to side, and one day, they roll over. Emotionally and intellectually, babies learn very quickly that when they cry, someone comes.

### Home is the Playground

Keep it safe, clean and interesting. Babies are on the floor and put everything into their mouths. This is their way of exploring. Keep

small and sharp things out of reach so your baby doesn't choke on them, poke an eye, or cut themselves. Keep their world safe by keeping dangerous things out of reach. Assume they will grab their first toy today, or roll over for the first time today. Their environment constantly needs to grow and change. Give them new toys (trade a blue ball for the red ball!)



### Babies Love to Move

Young babies enjoy having their arms and legs gently moved. Holding their hands, slowly move their arms back and forth across their chest. 'Bicycle' their legs and sing silly, nonsense songs that you make up just for the two of you. Holding them snugly, dance around the room to your favourite music.

## DADS AND CHANGES

When a new child arrives Dads often go through their own set of emotional changes. Life as a couple is very different than life as a family. The level of social activities will likely change, sometimes revolving around needs that had not been in the forefront before, such as catching up on sleep. Fatigue alone can produce powerful effects.

These life changes and what may seem like an entirely new experience with their partners can trigger emotional reactions. The connection they once experienced as a couple now has a huge new element, the extension of their circle of intimacy to include the care and nurturing of a brand new member. Attention to each others' needs may be temporarily overshadowed with the emotions arising from such an enormous responsibility.



Dads may, for example, have their own version of post-partum depression. One mother comments: "I wish we had this booklet when our first child was born. I didn't find out for years that my husband resented our first child, because it took my time and energy away from him. I didn't think about how he would feel, once I was so involved with caring for an infant. The world shifted for him. The unsaid part of this is that a wife needs to find a balance between caring for their infants and children while a lover to her husband." Communication between partners is the way to prevent resentments from building up. A valuable cue can be taken from books such as: *Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say*.



## SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW DADS TO HELP BABIES SLEEP

If you are like almost every other new father you are not alone in the issue of baby's sleep schedule.

### Take shifts with Mom

Agree before you go to bed at night which of you will get up with the baby first. It might help to simply pick even and odd hours. For example, if the baby wakes up during the 11pm, 1am, 3am, 5am hours then you wake up with them. If it's during the 12am, 2am, 4am, 6am hours then Mom will wake up with the baby. The point is have a plan before you go to sleep at night. This will lessen the anger and frustration of the moment when neither one of you wants to get up.

### Breastfeeding mothers need help

That's right! Don't assume that because Mom is breastfeeding that you are "off the hook." If Mom is breastfeeding she will treasure you for taking the time to get up and bring your baby to her. It seems insignificant now. But at 3 a.m. in the morning it's a beautiful gesture.

### Learn the different ways your baby likes to be held

Some like to be held chest to chest. Others like to be cradled. And still others like to be seated facing away from you. Find the position that your baby feels most comfortable and try soothing them in that position.

### Don't be too proud or embarrassed to sing softly and even talk to your baby

The sound of your voice is very reassuring to your baby and it is part of the bonding process. Your baby will quickly learn to associate your voice with safety and security.

### Gentle bouncing works sometimes

But be careful not to bounce your baby too much or you may upset their tummy.

### Pacifiers work too

After six weeks, some babies find comfort in a pacifier. Others refuse to accept it, especially if Mom is breastfeeding.

### Rocking

Either in a chair or in the bassinet. This can also be a helpful way of easing your baby back to sleep.

### Pacing the floor

This was very soothing to my daughter. In fact she would transition from a "deathly

scream" to silence if I put her chest to chest with her head on my shoulder and simply started pacing the room. While pacing the room you'll discover little nooks and crannies that you had never noticed before.

### A warm bath in a baby tub can also be a great way to soothe your baby before bedtime.

It's important that you have a towel to wrap your baby in right away after the bath. This will keep him from getting cold.

These are all useful tools that will help you get your baby back to sleep a little quicker - and that's good for you.



Adapted from Mike Farrell at [fatherville.com](http://fatherville.com)

**Happy Fathering!**