

NSLAP WELLNESS TIP: Preparing for life and work after baby: Fatherhood

The following is an article excerpt from Homewood Human Solutions™, your health and wellness provider.

Many men don't feel prepared for the challenge and change of becoming a new dad. Because babies come into the world without instructions, here are some quick tips for new dads:

- **Trust your instincts.** A little experience will quickly turn you into the world's leading expert on your own baby.
- **Learn from the best.** Ask the hospital nursery personnel to show you how to change, swaddle, and bathe your newborn.
- **Be patient and positive with your spouse.** Support and communication are crucial.
- **Stand your ground.** Do not allow anyone to distance you from your child.
- **Learn as a family.** This means the three of you. Accept necessary help from relatives, but do not allow them to interfere.
- **Take your child with you when you go out.** Babies are portable.
- **Step back,** think, and count to a high number when you become frustrated.
- **Make eye contact with your newborn.** Babies talk with their eyes.
- **Relax and enjoy the journey.** Make it a daily habit to play with your new baby and let him fall asleep on your chest.
- **Treasure each moment.** Remember that trying times pass.

The most important preparation takes place in a new father's mind. When your little one arrives, you want to be ready. Absorb all the information you can by learning from other dads. Or enroll in a workshop for new dads on the basics of caring for the newborn and bonding with your child.

Your baby will naturally help bring out the best in you. Dads understand this only when they get the first chance to hold their newborn and they begin to feel the love that has motivated men for centuries to protect and provide for their children.

Making the most of fatherhood

- **Consider shifting roles and taking on new responsibilities.** Before the birth of their first child, it is important for new dads to assume new household responsibilities and duties. Whether it is washing the dishes, vacuuming, or cooking dinner, it is important for new dads to help out in any way possible.
- **Learn from watching.** Many new dads decline to take part in several activities associated with parenthood because they are unsure of what they are doing. As with a new sport or any type of new activity, it is important to observe the activity and then try it.
- **Be sensitive to mom's emotions.** After nine months of pregnancy, and then giving birth to a child, many recent mothers experience a range of emotions. Extreme highs and lows occur randomly and frequently after childbirth. Consequently, it is important for new dads to be sensitive to these emotions, be supportive, and listen to the new mom's concerns. Beyond the changes in mom's emotions, new dads may find that their own feelings and emotions have become unpredictable.
- **A time of change.** Mood shifts and erratic feelings are rather common both for new dads and moms after childbirth. However, this should not continue for an extended period after childbirth. If

either parent continues to experience abnormal feelings and cannot regain emotional stability, she or he should speak with a professional.

- **Staying connected.** A good relationship requires time and intimacy – things that are often difficult for new parents. Researchers have identified the transition to parenthood as one of life's most challenging milestones that can either bring couples closer together or push them apart. Prepare by analyzing the changes that your lifestyle may go through and have realistic discussions about the division of chores. Think ahead about potential stress points. After the baby has arrived, make spending quality time alone together a priority and you'll find a way to make it happen.

*For additional information, support, resources and counseling on health and wellness, visit the NSLAP website at www.nslap.ca. Please note that **NSLAP** is your "company" name when you register. When you call the NSLAP number at **1-866-299-1299**, (Français: 1-866-398-9505; TTY: 1-888-384-1152) Your call will be answered any time, day or night, 365 days per year.*