

FOR DADS/PARTNERS

HOW PARTNERS CAN SUPPORT IN LABOR

- **REMINDERS**
Gentle reminders for her to breathe and relax her body.
- **WATER & FOOD**
Help keep her nourished in early labor and hydrated throughout labor.
- **LEAD BODY MOVEMENT AND POSITIONING**
Suggest diverse body movements or positions for her to try, especially if she is struggling.
- **GUIDE VISUALIZATIONS**
Read through scripted visualizations, or simple reminders to visualize her body relaxing, opening, and baby descending.
- **SUPPORT VOCALIZATIONS**
If her vocalizations become high pitched, erratic, anxious, or tense, try to coach her back to low, relaxed moans and grunts.
- **HELP CREATE A SAFE & RELAXING SPACE**
Help make sure the environment is conducive to calm, relaxation and offer pleasurable sensory experiences to help keep her fully present and engaged in her body.
- **HANDS ON SUPPORT**
Massage, touch, pressure, holding her hand, etc.
- **VERBAL SUPPORT**
Reassurance and encouragement.
- **ADVOCACY**
Advocate for her needs, your baby's needs, and your family's birth intentions.
- **PRESENCE**
Just be there. *Really* be there. Even if you are doing "nothing," this is everything.

FOR DADS/PARTNERS

WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR PARTNER POSTPARTUM

Labor and birth is an incredibly taxing experience (physically, mentally and emotionally) that requires careful attention to nourishment and rest in order to recover. This is complicated by the sleep deprivation and physical demands that come with caring for a newborn. If your partner is breastfeeding, the need for rest and nourishment is even greater. Finding a way to meet her needs for respite and recovery will take conscious strategizing. She will most definitely need your support and active participation. If labor was especially long, strenuous, complicated or resulted in an assisted birth or Cesarean she will require additional rest and nourishment to fully recover.

- Ensure she is well nourished and hydrated by helping prepare healthy meals and snacks, and bringing her water often.
- Sleep is critical but can be hard to come by. Work with her to develop strategies for getting as much sleep as possible. She needs at least one uninterrupted 4 hour stretch every day. (As time goes by it should get longer and longer)
- In order to fully recover she must TAKE IT EASY! Help make sure she can, and does.
- Pull a little extra weight around the house or find someone to come in and help her.
- If you don't stay on top of pain, it becomes harder to manage. Help ensure she is seeking pain relief *before* it gets too bad.
- Taking care of the baby is a two-person job (at least). Participate in every area of basic care possible.
- Everyone will want to visit and meet the baby; it will be your job to manage this as the "gate-keeper." Her needs for rest and recovery, and your needs as a family to bond and adjust come before the desire of others to meet your new baby.
- If you will need to go back to work right away, try to line up some help for her. Even having someone come by for an hour or two can allow her to catch a much needed nap.
- Labor, birth and recovery bring up a lot of emotions. Be gentle, sensitive and kind.
- If she is feeling insecure about her postpartum body, offer positive reassurance.
- Know and watch for signs of Postpartum Depression (in Postpartum Section). If you suspect your partner is struggling, seek help right away.
- Take care of yourself. You will be exerting more energy and getting less sleep which is taking for you too. Be sure you are eating well and getting sleep too. If you suspect you might be struggling with paternal postnatal depression, seek support right away. It is almost as common for new dads to struggle with depression and/or mood disorders as it is for new moms.

FOR DADS/PARTNERS

PATERNAL POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

Men can, and do, get depressed after the baby comes. This is known as Paternal Postnatal Depression. Recent studies found that depression scores among new fathers increased to 68% during the first 5 years of their children's lives. Full Paternal Postnatal depression affects up to 14% of all new dads, making it almost as common as Postpartum Depression in women.

Common Causes of Paternal Postnatal Depression:

- Sleep Deprivation
- Psychological Adjustment to Parenthood
- Personal or Family History of Depression
- Hormones (Research shows that levels of testosterone decrease and estrogen increases in men after babies are born!)
- Depressed Partner (Up to half of men with depressed partners are depressed too).
- Feeling disconnected from Baby or Partner (Many new dads feel "outside" of things).
- Recent loss, trauma, unplanned pregnancy, financial or work stress, family stress, colicky or demanding babies

Signs of Paternal Postnatal Depression:

- Irritability
- Isolating/Withdrawing from relationships
- Working a lot more or less
- Obsessive exercising habits
- Low Energy
- Fatigue
- Low motivation
- Poor concentration
- Changes in weight or appetite
- Impulsivity
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Risk-taking behaviors
- Physical symptoms (headaches, muscle aches, stomach/digestion issues)
- Anger and outbursts
- Violent Behavior
- Suicidal Thoughts

If you suspect that you (or your partner) could be suffering from Paternal Postnatal Depression, seek support right away. Counselors trained to work with Postpartum Depression are usually trained and familiar with PPD as well.

PROVIDENCE URGENT MENTAL HEALTH: 406-327-3034

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DADS: GETTING INVOLVED

It is actually quite common for Dads to share a feeling of being uninvolved or unneeded—especially in the first year with the first baby. Know that you are in an absolutely invaluable part of the family. You are part of the foundation. Inserting yourself into every area of baby care can help you to feel more involved. And, there are specific ways to get involved, and stay involved, as a Dad.

- Take time to learn every aspect of your baby's needs and routines and participate in all of them.
- Have a special task that is yours alone to do. Something bonding. Being the one to bathe baby is a great example. You will gain confidence knowing that you alone are responsible for meeting this very important need, and baby will learn to depend on you for it.
- Bond with your baby, face-to-face, every day. Study every aspect of her face, and she will study yours. This builds a very intimate and important bond.
- Know the developmental milestones, help track them and engage in activities that optimize your baby's body and brain development.
- Go on dates with your baby. Just the two of you. Find age-appropriate ways of including him in the activities you live. Take a walk. Go out for coffee. Take him fishing. As your baby grows, continue this tradition, one-on-one, throughout his childhood. He will look back on these traditions fondly.
- Play a role in nurturing. Children feel secure with two nurturing parents. If your baby or child is scared or hurt and cries out, don't be too quick to say "you're fine!" Reassurance is important, but it is also important for your child to learn to acknowledge and express how he feels. Encourage this by letting him know it is ok to feel, to cry, and to express himself fully and honestly.
- Stay involved with your partner. Making time for the relationship is critical. It was the two of you first, and kids need to see you together, in love, caring for each other, and prioritizing each other.
- If you are a working Dad, know that being a provider means more than just money. You want to provide many things for your family, including love and time. Know that your value and need at home involve far more than a paycheck.
- If you are a stay-at-home Dad, find a support network, if possible with other stay-at-home Dads.
- Ask for help. You won't have all the answers, and you shouldn't expect yourself to. Ask for support when you need, and allow yourself to receive it.