

Stress in Parents of Infants: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

Meeting the increased demands of being a new parent can be a big challenge. It is easy to get overtired and overwhelmed during the first weeks. What used to be a simple chore, such as buying groceries, is not so simple now. Plus, you have new chores, including feeding and changing your new baby. At the end of the day, you may be so tired that you feel like crying. Instead of looking forward to the next day, you may be dreading tomorrow. Like many new parents, you are burned out from the stress of having a new baby.

Stress affects each of us differently, and the most effective ways to relieve it are different for each person. You can try different methods to find out which ones work best for you. As the weeks go by, you will begin to develop a rhythm with your baby. Tasks that now seem to take forever will become easier.

Many women get the "baby blues" during the first few days after childbirth. If you are a new mother and the "baby blues" last more than a few days, call your doctor right away. Depression is a medical condition that requires treatment.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Be kind to yourself. Your new baby takes a lot of work, but he or she can give you a lot of pleasure too. Do not worry about housekeeping for a while.
- Allow your friends to bring you meals or do chores.
- Limit visitors to as few as you feel you can handle, or ask them not to visit for a while. Before they come, set a limit on how long they will stay.
- Sleep when your baby sleeps. Even a short nap helps.
- Find what triggers your stress, and avoid those things as much as you can.
- If you breastfeed, learn how to collect and store some breast milk so your partner or babysitter can feed the baby while you sleep. Experts usually recommend waiting about a month until breastfeeding is going well before offering a bottle.
- Eat a balanced diet so you can keep up your energy.
- Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol. Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, cola drinks, chocolate, and other foods.
- Limit medicines that can make you more tired, such as tranquilizers and cold and allergy medicines.
- Get regular daily exercise, such as walks, to help improve your mood. Rest after you exercise.
- Be honest with yourself and those who care about you. Tell them you are stressed and tired.
- Talking to other new parents can help. Ask your doctor or child's doctor to suggest support groups for new parents. Hearing that someone else is having the same experiences you are can help a lot.
- If you have the baby blues for more than a few days, call your doctor right away.

When should you call for help?

Call anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have thoughts of hurting yourself, your baby, or another person.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You are having trouble caring for yourself or your baby.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.

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