



PARENT  
RESOURCE  
CENTRE  
OTTAWA

Newborn



# SELF-CARE FOR NEW PARENTS

## YOUR WELL-BEING MATTERS

Welcoming a new baby into your home is a special time that is full of many large and powerful feelings. Some feelings you expect, such as immense joy and love, and others come along as part of the package, such as sadness, anxiety and stress. It's easy to feel overwhelmed with your baby's constant needs. Taking care of yourself is crucial for being the best parent you can be. Here are some quick tips to ensure you are taking care of your own needs while caring for your baby.

## COVER THE BASICS: EAT, SLEEP, MOVE

- **Keep your energy up and mood boosted** with nutritious meals and snacks rich in iron, protein and Omega 3-s especially if you are breast feeding. Try to limit caffeine to mornings and limit sugar intake if you can as this will help keep your energy balanced during the day.
- **Stay active and incorporate daily movement activities into your day that bring you joy.** Exercise lifts your mood, improves sleep and boosts your metabolism. Take walks with your baby, dance, practice yoga or find a baby friendly stroller walk group or exercise class. Spend time outdoors for a physical and emotional lift as fresh air and sunshine work wonders. Just relaxing outdoors on a lawn chair or rocking chair can really make a difference.
- **Prioritize your sleep.** Babies have their own unique sleep rhythm and developing neurological system. Learning to sleep through the night takes time and babies and young children often have disrupted sleep. Take naps when you can and prioritize rest over chores. Don't hesitate to ask for help from friends and family.



## CARVE OUT SOME ME TIME EVERYDAY

**Time to yourself is essential so you can be at your best when bonding with your baby.** Enjoy mini breaks reading, taking a bath, chatting with friends online. Nurture yourself by meditating, journaling, listening to music that inspires you or creating a special keepsake for your child.

## CONNECT WITH YOUR PARTNER OR SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE

Whether you are a single parent or a couple, **don't forget your support network.** Take moments to connect, even if it's just lounging on the couch for a cuddle. Share your joys and worries and trust that things will start to flow more naturally with time. **Maintain your relationships even if it means adjusting the way you connect.** Friends and family can offer a helping hand, support and a fresh perspective. If someone offers to help you, be specific about what you need. Hand them a basket of laundry to fold, ask them to prepare a meal, take the garbage out, or grab a few groceries for you. It takes a village to raise a child. Stay connected to your village.

## SET BOUNDARIES

**Your rest and recovery are top priorities,** even if everyone wants to meet the new baby. If it is not a good time for a visit, say so. If that makes you feel guilty, ask your partner or a good friend to help you manage visits. Try to have healthy boundaries around work, social, and volunteer obligations so you do not become overtired or overstretched.

## EMBRACE GENTLENESS AND FLEXIBILITY

**Parenthood may not match your expectations** and that's okay. Babies have their own unique needs and **sometimes things won't go as planned.** Try to let go of expectations and embrace the flow for now. Take the time to learn about your baby and their preferences. Prioritize what matters. It's okay if things aren't perfect right now. Focus on your new family and let some tasks wait. The dishes and laundry can wait while you cherish these early moments and take care of each other.

## FOLLOW YOUR BABY'S LEAD

**Your baby is unique and will develop at their own pace and readiness.** Spend time each day talking, singing, reading and playing with your baby. Pay attention to their non-verbal cues, babbling, gestures and verbal cues. Use caregiving routines such as diapering, feeding, bath and bedtime as connection times. Be playful and enjoy every age and stage!

