



## Supporting your partner

It can be hard to know what to do in the first few weeks after your baby arrives, and often we just focus on coping ourselves. A supportive relationship makes all the difference and has benefits for baby too. Here are some tips to help you support your partner:

- » It's common for partners to feel a bit overwhelmed by the birth and unsure what to do in the first weeks with a new baby.
- » It's VERY IMPORTANT to support your partner by telling them that they are doing a great job! Give them a break by taking the baby for walks, offering cups of tea, sending them to the coffee shop, running a bath for them etc... These ideas work best when the baby is content. If the baby is crying this will take priority.
- » If you didn't physically have the baby you may feel a bit left out when the baby first arrives, and miss your partner's attention, but this is a time for you to build your relationship with your new baby too. If you work together, your relationship can grow stronger and closer through parenting together. These little things will make a big difference – try them.
- » Don't worry too much about your sex life disappearing – it will return if you are a loving and patient partner. Be helpful around your home, get involved with the baby, be interested in your partners feelings, compliment your partner, do the dishes, hang out the washing etc... these are the best aphrodisiacs.
- » Don't be put off if your partner guides you in what to do, that doesn't mean you are doing it wrong. Gently remind them that partners have different ways of doing things and as they get older babies often like the variety. As long as they are safe, reasonably happy, fed, and cleanish... you are doing it right.
- » Help your partner when she is feeding. If breast feeding you can help by bringing her water, pillows, reading material, foot rest etc. If you are using formula make sure that you help prepare the bottles so they are ready to go. You may grow to love giving your baby a bottle – try the 3 am feed!
- » When in doubt and the baby won't settle – pushing the pram around the streets for 15–30 minutes will help you relax and the movement usually settles the baby too. Babies love movement! If the baby is in a routine try to stick to it – babies love a predictable life. If the baby is very hungry and you can't give them a bottle, there is not much you can do – they usually scream until they get fed but it doesn't actually hurt them – so try to stay calm cuddle them and find mum. Put them in a safe place and walk away if you feel angry or if you feel out of control, and get help. Having children can be the best and also hardest thing you will do, and can bring out the best and worst in you. Be kind to yourself, but get help if you need it.
- » Talk to other dads/ partners, you'll see that some people have easy, settled babies and some have more challenging ones who don't sleep much, who have reflux, who need more patting and settling. A lot of it is just luck – so push on and think positive, it will improve. This is a great time to learn about yourself and who you want to be as a partner and as a parent.
- » Create a checklist of things that you know have worked to settle the baby so far on different occasions. Nappy change, feeding time, burping, rocking, walking with the pram, music etc...

Above all let the little things go, be supportive towards each other. It's challenging but ultimately the most rewarding thing you will ever experience. If you are finding it difficult to be supportive and you are feeling down or unsure there is more information in our links at the end of this section.