

Postpartum: Managing Fatigue

Fatigue is one of the greatest challenges of being a parent. When you're tired, both your relationship and your parenting are at risk. Being tired opens the door to conflict, increases your stress level, and can ignite anger. Fatigue is a universal complaint of new parents, yet few couples have a plan to get the sleep they need. It is essential that you **work together** as a team to develop a plan so that both of you get as much sleep as possible.

- How does fatigue affect you? How does it affect your partner?
- What is your current sleep pattern? How many hours of sleep do you need to function normally? That is the amount of sleep you owe yourself each day.
- Establish a regular sleep pattern. Have a bedtime routine, a set bedtime, and return to bed after baby's feedings until your set amount of sleep has been met.
- Make sleep a high priority (right after meeting baby's needs for food and comfort).
- Decide who will get up with the baby for nighttime feedings. If mom is breastfeeding, will dad get up to help?
- Create an environment that supports sleep. Keep the lighting low, turn off the phone, have a background "white noise" on, etc. If you are a very light sleeper, you may find it helpful to let baby sleep in his own room at night so that you don't awaken with every coo or grunt. Don't worry, he'll cry loud enough to awaken you when he's hungry! During the day, let him sleep close to you in a bassinet, so that you don't have to go far to get him for feedings.
- Try relaxation, a warm shower, or a warm non-caffeinated beverage before sleeping.
- Reduce or eliminate caffeine, alcohol, and cigarette smoking.
- Exercise regularly. Daily walks in the fresh air help tremendously!