

Preparing for baby

New parents have a lot of adjustments to make. Some of these adjustments are commonly quite challenging for new families. Here are a few that we have found often add to the stress of experiencing a new baby and can be minimized by anticipating these during pregnancy. If you can discuss these and agree to a plan prior to labor and birth, you will be well ahead of the game.

- **Household renovations:** Dad/Partner—avoid taking on household projects or renovations during the time you are home with mom after the birth of the baby! Although tempting, this is a time best devoted to learning to care for your new son or daughter and bonding as a new family.
- **Partnership Balance:** Balance the baby care duties between the two of you. Dad/Partner, you are not a “helper” to mom, but a partner in this new family. Divide the duties and take responsibilities equally.
- **Support:** Mom—it is important for you to have support of peers with similar situations (new babies). If you don’t have several friends with new babies, definitely plan to attend Cradle Talk to make new friends and form play groups—these are for **YOUR** benefit. Dads, find other new dads to compare notes with (Daddy Boot Camp might be a good place to start. www.EEHealth.org/edward-classes).
- **Expectations about life with baby:** Minimize unrealistic expectations! When one partner goes back to work, the other will be left with all the baby care responsibilities during the day. Plan to share the responsibilities once home from work or even take over for a while to give the other a break. Don’t be surprised if you come home to find your partner is still in his/her pj’s with a messy house and no food on the table—he/she’s been working non-stop taking care of another little person!
- **Adopt a “good enough” mentality:** Avoid the mindset that you’re “irresponsible” or “less than” if you ask for help. Set up meals ahead of time (Meal Train) and arrange for a few close friends to run errands, help with laundry or do housework. You can’t expect to be Super Mom or Super Dad and do it all! When others ask “what can I do to help?” let them know specifically what you need.
- **Coping Strategies:** Learn what to do for a fussy baby! Expect baby to be fussy sometimes—it is not because you are a bad/inadequate parent! Have someone you can call to help if you have reached the end of your rope. It is healthy to put the baby down in a safe place and step away for a few minutes to recompose and calm yourself.
- **Relationship Issues:** Discuss who will help and how (particularly in-law and parent help). If you don’t feel comfortable having family stay with you for 2 hours or 2 weeks—tell them ahead of time. Give them an alternative that you and your partner agree upon in advance (united front approach). Make expectations clear if family is coming to stay. Grandparent’s duties are best designed to care for the house, the meals, and the new parents (while the new parents are learning to care for the baby)! Grandparents (or house visitors) should respect mom’s privacy to breastfeed and nap, especially when baby is napping.
- Work on weak links in relationships before the baby comes. If you have issues with an in-law or a relative now, it will be blown up even bigger once baby comes.