

TIPS FOR POSTPARTUM HEALTH: FATHERS, PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Effective communication may be challenging following the birth of a baby, as couples attempt to sort out new demands, roles and expectations. Handling this challenge well requires respect, patience and caring. One of the most important things to remember is to listen to each other in a non-judgmental way. While this may sound simple, it can be difficult when couples are lacking sleep and have expectations that are not being met. The following tips can help.

- If you're not sure how to help, don't be afraid to ask.
- Make arrangements for some in-home help if possible such as help with meals and housekeeping. Accept support from family or friends if they offer it.
- Notice positive things and share your feedback.
- If your partner loses patience, be reassuring that it's OK to be frustrated.
- If your partner has difficulty asking for support, there are some practical things you can do to help. Keep a jug of fresh water close by, look after the baby so your partner can get some rest, look after company or ask them to come back if it's not a good time and make sure your partner has some time every day to do something she enjoys.

Take time for yourselves as a couple

- Now that you have a baby, making time for your relationship may be challenging. Set aside some time once a week to do something together, even if it's just staying home and watching a movie. Make plans but be flexible in case the baby is fussy. Try to pick a time that works with the baby's schedule.
- Recognize that your partner's body has gone through big changes and it may be some time before she feels like herself again. She may feel "all touched out" from breastfeeding or caring for the baby. Don't take it personally. Respect her need for space and let her know that when she is ready, you look forward to being close again.
- You also need time for yourself. Talk with your partner about what works, and arrange for another helper or friend to be there if needed. Everyone should enjoy a break, free of guilt.

As a new father, you are adjusting to your new role as a parent but also adapting to many changes in your relationship with your partner. Recognizing these changes as a normal part of the parenting process and having a patient and caring attitude will go a long way toward a positive experience as a father and a couple.

