



the first month

A Premier Pediatrics
Program for New Parents

**5 TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR
PARTNER PREPARE FOR THE
BIRTH OF YOUR BABY FROM
A PEDIATRICIAN AND DAD**

Being a pediatrician and a father of two, I've thought a lot about what the father's role is after birth. Despite five years as a practicing pediatrician nothing prepared me for the moment I became a father. I felt clueless, not sure what to do with this new human who had come into our lives. During these early weeks, it's often confusing to know what a partner's role is. Here are five tips to pass on to your partner.

Understand that it may take a while before you hit your groove

A mother and a newborn develop a natural bond through pregnancy. This often continues to evolve after the birth through feeding and physical bonding. You too may feel an immediate attachment when you first hold your child -- but do not be alarmed if it takes a few weeks, or even months. Ambivalence is quite common after a child is born, and usually gives way to pride and love as you get to know your baby. Look for ways to connect with you baby. Try skin to skin, singing to your newborn or even reading the newspaper out loud. Your baby will enjoy the sound of your voice and the physical closeness and this can help you feel more bonded. Your partner will appreciate the break!

You are in the best position to monitor the emotional well-being of your baby's mother

Help to make sure that she sees to her psychological needs with the same attentiveness that she sees to her physical ones. Reassure her that it is alright to rest, eat, exercise, laugh and help her find the time to connect with another adult even for a few minutes a day. It is also important for a partner to be aware of the signs of postpartum depression. These include major fatigue, sadness, guilt, over-concern for the baby, lack of interest in the baby, the conviction that she is not up to the task, exaggerated highs and lows, hopelessness, or an inability to sleep when the baby sleeps. If you are concerned about your partner, please reach out to your pediatrician. At Premier Pediatrics, we screen all new mothers for postpartum depression and provide resources to help guide new families through the transition to parenthood.

Anticipate and handle the practical tasks

During these early days, your baby's mother is recovering from the birth, adjusting to her new relationship with the baby that she has carried through pregnancy, and, if breastfeeding, trying to figure out how to nourish this new being all while being sleep deprived. That is a tall physical and emotional challenge. Show your partner you are there to support her with your actions, not only your words. If you quietly take ownership of the practical family responsibilities that still need to get done and anticipate the new tasks such as diapering, feeding with a bottle, or picking up the breast pump, this will allow her the time and the peace of mind that she can focus on her recovery and bonding with the baby.

It is alright to take a moment for yourself.

No matter how you feel during these early days, remember that it's completely legitimate to feel pretty much anything. Make sure to carve out small moments for yourself. This may mean getting a cup of coffee before buying diapers; it may mean taking twenty minutes to phone a friend. This will go a long way towards helping you and your family remain healthy. It's not selfish. It's shoring up your own wellbeing so that you can be strong for your partner.

Know the resources if you need help

Many people don't realize what a critical role your pediatrician plays in helping both parents transition into a family. At Premier Pediatrics, we run a unique new program called The First

Month, designed to help mothers and partners transition from pregnancy to parenthood. We have partnered with a diverse and exceptional team of specialists committed to getting your young family off on the right foot. Specifically, we focus on helping mothers and fathers meet their feeding goals, screening and treating new mothers for postpartum depression, and presenting relevant and practical parenting classes.

Welcoming a new baby into the family is exciting and at times overwhelming. You are not alone. Many have done it before you and we at Premier can be a great resource to you. Time goes quickly so take the time to enjoy these early moments and if you are having trouble with that reach out.