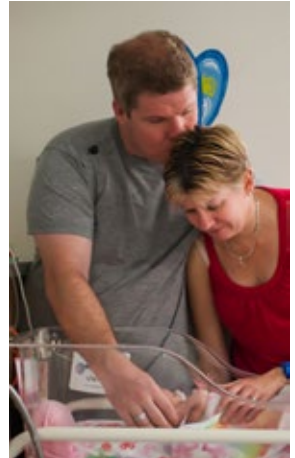


## Being involved in your baby's care

The love and care you can provide as a Dad can make a huge difference to your baby's health and development. The birth of a premature or sick baby can be a challenging time for everyone involved. Being a Dad in a neonatal unit is a tough job, and one that sometimes can feel unrecognised.

You may be experiencing a whole range of emotions such as anger, sadness, grief and guilt, but rest assured you are not alone in these feelings. Having a baby in hospital is probably not how you imagined becoming a dad. Below are some suggestions to help with these concerns.



### What you can do

- ✓ Get to know your baby, activates such as Kangaroo care, singing and reading to your baby help.
- ✓ Talk to your partner. Men and women process and handle stressful situations differently.
- ✓ Take photos and videos of your baby to share with your partner.
- ✓ Self-care is important. When possible, sleep, take food breaks and exercise.
- ✓ Connect to a support group such as Life's Little Treasures for peer support.
- ✓ Plan ahead and set up a support network for when your partner and baby come home. Set up a roster for lifts to hospital, or preparing a supply of freezer meals.
- ✓ Get to know the people and equipment in the NICU. Find out who does what, and why.
- ✓ Ask for handouts and information from the hospital. This will help you to better understand what is happening around you.
- ✓ Talk to your social worker – they have access to a range of helpful support services.
- ✓ Talk to your employer. A lot of employers will be willing to work around hospital visits.

## Being involved in your baby's care

The love and care you can provide as a Dad can make a huge difference to your baby's health and development. Here are some simple things you can do with your baby in hospital.

- Be with your baby as often as possible
- Be with your baby as long as possible
- Learn about what your baby likes, can tolerate (the position of her body, arms legs) how noise and sharp sounds affect them
- Talk or sing softly – and especially say hello each morning and goodbye each evening
- Hold their hand, put your hand on her back, head or bottom, feel how she breathes
- Hold and kangaroo care as often as you can, cherish the still quiet moments
- Learn to change nappies in such a way that your baby knows it is you.
- Soothe and be gentle and slow with your baby as you handle her
- Read stories to your baby
- Bath your baby



"I wanted to hear that this is a normal reaction and you are going to be able to handle it".

## How to be a supportive partner and look after yourself

One of the most important things you can do when possible is to take care of your own physical and emotional health as then you will be at your best to provide support to your partner and care for your baby.

- Maintain a routine
- Make time to get enough sleep
- Regular exercise can reduce stress
- Eat regularly and stay away from unhealthy snacks. Try to be mindful of your own personal and individual feelings and needs
- Avoid alcohol, medications or other drugs in excess to help you manage this situation
- Talk to other parents, nurses, social workers and doctors if you feel you are not coping
- Take time out for your own mental space – read, watch TV, meditate, listen to music.