



Tips for Dads

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 and being a dad in a neonatal unit is a tough job, and one that sometimes can feel unrecognised.

You may experience 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 would be. >

What you can do

- Get to know your baby with activities such as kangaroo care, singing and reading to your baby.
- Talk to your partner. Men and women process and handle stress differently.
- Take photos and videos of your baby to share with your partner.
- Self-care is important. When possible, sleep, have food breaks and exercise.
- Connect to a support group such as Life's Little Treasures for peer support.
- Plan ahead, set up a support network for when baby comes home with a hospital lift roster, or a supply of freezer meals.
- Get to know the equipment and people in the NICU. Find out who does what, and why.
- In hospital, ask for handouts and information to help you to understand what is happening around you.
- Talk to your social worker. They have access to helpful support services.
- Talk to your employer. Many employers will be willing to work around hospital visits.



information



support



understanding

Get involved in your baby's day to day care in hospital

As a dad you can make a huge difference to your baby's health and development with the love and care you provide. These can be simple things you can do for your baby in hospital;

- Be with your baby as often and as long as possible.
- Soothe and handle your baby gently and slowly. Hold her hand or put your hand on her back, head or bottom and feel how she breathes.
- Learn what she likes, which physical positions she can tolerate and how noise affects her.
- Talk or sing softly, say 'hello' and 'goodbye' and read stories to your baby.
- Hold and kangaroo care as often as you can and be sure to cherish these still quiet moments you share.
- Learn to change nappies and bath your baby in such a way that your baby knows it is you.



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Look after yourself to be at your best for your family

It's important to take care of your own physical and emotional health where possible to be able to provide the right support to your partner and baby.

- Maintain a routine.
- Make time to get enough sleep.
- Reduce stress with regular exercise.
- Eat healthily.
- Avoid excess alcohol, medications or other drugs to help you try to manage this situation.
- Be mindful of your own personal feelings and individual needs.
- Take time out for your own mental space – read, watch TV, meditate or listen to music.
- If you feel you are not coping, talk to other parents, nurses, social workers and doctors.

“I wanted to hear that ‘this is a normal reaction’ and ‘you are going to be able to handle it’.”

