

Taking Care of the New Mom and Baby

The first few days following childbirth are crucial to the health of new moms and babies. It is important that new moms receive adequate rest, nutrition and support to have a healthy recovery and get the best start with baby. The following guidelines are for visitors during the first few weeks postpartum:

When visitors or family come into our home we naturally want to make them feel welcome and we consider their comfort. It is easy for a mother who has given birth at home to forget that she needs the same recovery period as she would have been given in the hospital, to bring in her milk and allow her to bond effectively with the new baby. Please limit the amount of personal attention you ask for from the new mom right now. For the first week or so she will tire easily with talk and needs to sleep whenever the baby does.

That's easy for her to forget, so you'll need to remember! Its a good idea to limit talk-time to ten minutes and avoid tense subjects. Try to offer minimal advice, it can be overwhelming: wait for new parents to ASK.

Come and visit with a specific plan to be helpful to the new family - bring good food, do laundry, wash dishes, run errands, take care of pets, take older children out for awhile for some special attention. If you have presents for the new baby, bring something nice for the other child(ren) as well, to recognize their important new role. Greet young children in the home before you make much of the new baby - let them introduce you or update you on the baby.

Always wash hands before touching the new baby! This includes EVERYONE but is especially true for children who visit - babies don't break - but they do get sick.

Small children can certainly hold the baby, but their hands MUST be clean and they should be taught not to kiss baby's face (the top of the baby's head smells wonderful - kiss there).

Remember - you are taking care of the mom so she can take care of the baby, never the other way around. It is okay to hold baby for short periods of 5 to 10 minutes at a time, but remember to limit separating baby from mom or dad for more than that, especially in the first few weeks. This is especially important for the health of babies who are premature (born prior to 38 weeks), small (less than 7lbs), had a difficult delivery or have special needs.

These first days pass quickly, and the new baby will be here for years to come for everyone to enjoy.