

What to Know

Being a new dad will be rewarding and exciting. It will also be a challenge. The early days of being a dad can be really tough. You can make them easier by bonding with your baby. This section will help you bond. It will also help you meet your little one's most pressing needs.



1. Get in the Game Right Away

Your baby is here! It's time to get involved. Be there right from the start to change diapers, give your baby a bath, and go to doctor visits. Be as involved in your baby's life as much as you can. By being involved from birth, you can give your baby the best chance at a great life!

2. Take or Ask for Paternity Leave

If your workplace offers time off for dads when their baby is born, take it. That's called "paternity leave." (If your workplace offers leave for **dads and moms** when a baby is born, your workplace might call it "**parental** leave.") Not sure whether your workplace offers it? Ask. If your workplace doesn't offer formal paid or unpaid paternity (or parental) leave, ask for as much time off as they're willing to give and you can afford. Chances are that you, your baby, and your family will be better off for it.

3. Touch, Hold, and Play with Your Baby

There's no better way to bond with your baby than to touch, hold, and play with them. Don't worry. You won't hurt or drop your child! Touch helps babies stay healthy and thrive. Newborns who receive touch from their dads are more likely to attach in a healthy way to their dads¹.

4. Make Time for Your Baby

Before you became a dad, your time was pretty much your own. Not anymore. You might have to change your schedule to provide for your baby's needs. So, do it! Review your normal week. Look for ways to make more time for your family. Can you take paternity (or parental) leave? Can you avoid working late by bringing work home to do after your baby goes to sleep? Can you change your work schedule? Can you telecommute? Can you get a new shift? Can you give up a hobby to spend that time with your family?

5. Make Time for Your Relationship with Your Partner

A strong and healthy relationship makes for happier, healthier parents and children. Don't let the changes that come with a new baby drive you and your partner apart. Your partner still needs your love and time. Discuss how you feel as new parents and support each other. Have a date

night once a week, even if at home after your baby goes to sleep. While a baby can make your relationship stronger, you still have to work at it.

6. Don't Think a Paycheck Equals Love

Being a dad means so much more than bringing home a paycheck. Don't be the guy who looks back one day to learn that he spent too much time at work and not enough time with his child. It's okay as a new dad to worry about money. Taking paternity (or parental) leave is a great first step to being the dad your baby needs you to be.

7. Understand that Being a Dad Isn't Always Easy

Being a dad can cause stress, make you tired, and even make you wonder why you had a child! You might feel crazy at times. No more so than right after the birth. No man is a natural at being a dad. It's normal to feel sad, angry, or any range of things. Being a dad can be a roller coaster. Talk with other dads who have older children. Ask them what to expect and how to handle the ups and downs of being a dad.

What Else (Paternity Leave)

Paternity leave is key for new dads. It allows you to be there with your baby and bond with them right from the start. When raising your baby with a partner, it's also a way to show your partner that you're in it for the long-haul.

Here are some tips for home and work:

- **Take paternity leave!** Learn about paternity (or parental) leave options at work. Take as much leave as you can afford.
 - If your workplace offers formal paid or unpaid paternity (or parental) leave, make it work for you and your workplace. Prepare for your leave in advance. Work with your boss and coworkers to ensure they can cover your work and help you return smoothly after leave.
 - If your workplace doesn't have formal paid or unpaid paternity (or parental) leave, talk with your boss about a leave option that will work. Can you use some annual leave? Can you work a reduced or flex schedule for a short time?
 - If your partner also works and your family can't afford for both of you to take leave when your baby is born, think about taking your leave when your partner returns to work.
- **It's okay to be worried about taking leave.** Perhaps other dads at your workplace didn't take leave when their children were born. If so, remember to:
 - Keep your focus on what's best for your baby, your family, and you.
 - You can lead the way for other dads to feel better about taking leave.
 - You can help set the tone in your workplace that says you can be a great dad and employee at the same time.

- **Be a proud dad, in words and actions.** Make your voice heard as a parent and as a leader at work.
 - Help others at your workplace learn more about the crucial role dads play in raising healthy children.
 - The good news is that more men in the workplace than ever are saying that being an involved dad is vital to them.
 - When you and others dads at work discuss being a dad, all of you become leaders on this issue.
 - You will make it easier for future dads to be the dad their children need them to be.
- **Start a dads' group at your workplace.** This is a great way to lead at work. Create a formal or informal group where dads can feel safe sharing the ups and downs on raising children.
 - Start small with a few dads at work who you know are great dads. Decide when and where to meet.
 - Then invite other dads to join. Invite coworkers who will soon become or have already become a dad for the first time. Invite new hires who are dads.
 - Dads can mentor other dads. To learn how, download the free ebook called "Guide to Mentoring Fathers" here: <https://www.fatherhood.org/mentoring-fathers-ebook>.
 - National Fatherhood Initiative® offers formal programs for dads that include 24/7 Dad® and The 7 Habits of a 24/7 Dad™. Perhaps your workplace will help your group acquire one. Learn more about 24/7 Dad® here: <https://store.fatherhood.org/24-7-dad-programs> and 7 Habits here: <https://store.fatherhood.org/the-7-habits-of-a-24-7-dad>.
- **Be a partner in parenting.** When raising your baby with a partner, the best thing for your family is to be an equal partner in raising your baby. Here's how:
 - Spend as much time bonding with and caring for your baby as you can. Your family will thank you for it.
 - Talk with your partner early and often about how you will share tasks to care for your baby and your household. Carry your share of the load. Be willing to do household tasks that might not have been your normal ones before your baby was born. Parenting is all about teamwork.
 - Talk about both of your parenting and career goals. Talk about ways that each of you can help the other achieve them.

What to Ask (questions to self)

- How vital is it for me to be involved in my baby's life right from the start?
- What are some ways I can show my baby that I'm involved?
- How will I work with my partner to be involved?
- Does my workplace offer formal paid or unpaid paternity (or parental) leave? If so, how will I use it?
- If my workplace doesn't offer formal paid or unpaid paternity (or parental) leave, are there other ways I can work with my boss to spend time with my baby?

Learn More (Benefits of Paternity Leave)

Research shows that paternity leave has a huge impact on dads, moms, and their children.

- **Dads are healthier, happier, and more confident dads.**
 - Time spent caring for children early on increases dads' confidence in their ability to care for their child².
 - Like women, men are wired to care for their children. Dads' hormones change to help them bond with their child³.
 - Dads report fewer mental or physical health issues. They are more productive at work⁴. They report being happier, and that includes with their marriage⁵.
- **Women are healthier.**
 - When dads take paternity leave, mothers' well-being improves⁶.
 - New moms are less likely to be depressed when paternity leave results in more baby care by dads⁷.
- **Children get the "Father Effect!"**
 - Babies brains develop better⁸. That's even true with "preemie" babies⁹.
 - Dads who take paternity leave tend to have a broader view in what they believe it's okay for men and women to do and become. Their daughters tend to aim higher in their careers. Their sons tend to have a broader view of what is okay for men and women to do and become¹⁰.

Sources

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Additional Resources

For additional resources and information on paternity leave, visit: dovemencare.com/paternity-leaveresources

TAKE THE PLEDGE FOR PATERNITY LEAVE at www.dovemencare.com/pledge

Less than 1 in 5 men in the U.S. are offered any paid paternity leave. Most dads who do have it don't believe they can take their full time off to care for a newborn. It's time to change that.

Working dads shouldn't have to choose between their children and a paycheck. That's because when they take paternity leave, it benefits families, workplaces, and communities.

Take the Pledge for Paternity Leave and join Dove Men+Care on their mission to make paid paternity leave the new standard. Over the next two years, Dove Men+Care is committing \$1 million to fund paternity leave for real dads so they can take this meaningful time off.

Learn more at www.dovemencare.com/pledge