

TIPS FOR ADDRESSING THE BABY BLUES

By Lois V. Nightingale, Ph.D.

1. Spend time with your baby! Remember how long you have been waiting to hold your precious angel.
2. Rest! Rest! Rest! Enjoy this time with your new baby. Let others wait on you. Enjoy being pampered for the first few days you are home (longer if you underwent a cesarean or other major complications).
3. Bring baby into your room or bed to minimize walking.
4. Avoid fixed or rigid schedules, they place undue stress on new mothers. Go with the baby's flow and your own intuition.
5. Avoid overexertion, bothersome friends and relatives. Limit length and number of visits per day. (If uninvited guests find you in a robe they are less likely to over-stay their welcome).
6. Get up for short periods of time, some exercise is good. Do not overexert yourself. Fatigue and pain can exaggerate negative feelings. Notice when you are feeling weary.
7. Whenever your baby sleeps, rest or sleep yourself. (This is NOT the time to jump up and do those 40 chores you have been thinking about!)
8. Eat right. Have healthy snack foods on hand. Nutritious, easily prepared foods are helpful. (Send the donuts home with grandma). Make sure to eat some complex carbohydrates (bread, corn, rice, rye, potatoes, oats, whole- wheat crackers, etc.) every three hours to keep your blood sugar up.
9. Drink lots of fluids. Your body is healing, and if you are breast-feeding extra fluids are essential. Drink lots of water. Unsweetened juices are also terrific. Avoid caffeine, and empty calorie sodas. Avoid or conscientiously limit alcohol use.
10. Get help with the housework, meals and other children. Take friends up on their offers of: "If there's anything I can do, just ask". Don't be afraid to ask!
11. Prioritize to conserve energy. Not all housework is equally important.
12. Thank Dad when he helps around the house, with meals or the older children. A little gratitude will go a long way during these days.
13. Hand squeezes, hugs and kisses between Mom and Dad, to keep you both going.
14. Pamper yourself. Give yourself a facial, or a manicure. Condition your hair. Take a bath by yourself or with your baby. Read a frivolous book (you deserve it after months of studying only serious baby material).
15. Get outside. Enjoy the fresh air. Take baby with you for a walk in a stroller or baby carrier. Don't try to do too much too soon. Work up slowly. Listen to your body.

16. Surround yourself with other moms. Find groups of new mothers with whom you can talk to and go do things with your babies. (Mother and baby exercise classes, park days, La Leche League, the hospital's new Parents' group, childbirth class reunions, your roommate in the hospital, babysitting co-ops, church, temple or synagogue groups, neighbors, or start your own group).
17. Learn relaxation techniques or meditation. Learn to make the most of the few quiet moments you have. (Remember the relaxation exercises from childbirth classes).
18. Focus on what you are doing. Concentrate on the present, this precious time goes by very fast.
19. Do fun things with your baby. (Baby gym classes, walks, dress him/her up in that "adorable" outfit, go to the park and feed the ducks, nature walks etc.)
20. Exercise with doctors' approval. (Ask about specific exercises and how long you should wait to begin after delivery).
21. Be gentle with yourself, give yourself ample time to heal. The physical, hormonal and psychological recovery from pregnancy, labor and delivery may take longer than you had anticipated.
22. Take all advice with a grain of salt. Follow your own mothering intuition. You know what is best for your beautiful baby!!

Lois V. Nightingale, Ph.D. (lic# PSY9503) director of the Nightingale Center with offices in Newport Beach and Yorba Linda, California 714-993-5343. Copyright © 1998 Dr Lois Nightingale