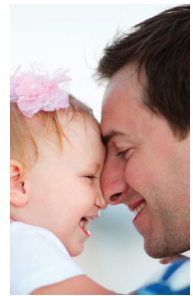


ENGAGED FATHER
PROGRAM

DADS & KIDS GROWING TOGETHER

INVOLVED DAD:

THE FIRST FEW MONTHS





The Genesee County Healthy Start Fatherhood Program provides support and parent education to men whose partners are expecting a child, or men who have a young child. Our program provides father-friendly parenting resources and peer-based support, with the goal of enhancing the health and wellbeing of families.





WELCOME TO FATHERHOOD!

Dads make a difference! Kids that have an involved dad have more confidence, get better grades in school, are less likely to use drugs, and are less likely to be involved in criminal activity.

Whether you're a new dad or an old pro, the experience of having a new baby is exhilarating, fun, challenging, and sometimes difficult.

Healthy Start is here to help you be the best dad you can be.

Many dads don't know how important they are, especially in the first year. But dads play a very important role. Your presence and caring for your baby is critical to your baby's health and development.

By caring for your baby, playing with your baby, talking to your baby, and supporting your partner, you are creating a positive relationship with your baby.

FOLLOW THE
TIPS IN THIS
BOOKLET FOR
MORE IDEAS!

SELF CARE DURING EARLY FATHERHOOD

Just like with maternal depression (postpartum depression or “baby blues”), men can feel down after the birth of a new baby. These are common feelings after a new baby is born.

WARNING SIGNS

- Sadness, feeling down
- Tired, lack of energy
- Loss of interest in things that normally bring pleasure
- Anxiety or fearfulness
- Feeling worn out
- Feeling like you’re not good enough
- Changes in appetite
- Cranky, easily frustrated

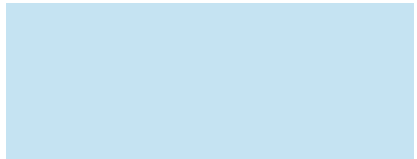
There are lots of ways to help you feel better so you can be the best dad you can be.

PRO-TIP

What you can do:

- Talk to someone you trust. Just saying out loud that you are stressed, frustrated, or feeling down can help you feel better. You may learn you’re not alone and get some helpful ideas to cope when things are difficult.
- Get a check-up with your doctor. If you’re feeling tired, cranky, and low in energy, you might be depressed and a doctor can help.
- Exercise, relax, and set aside time for yourself.
- Remember, feeling connected to a new baby can take time. If you don’t feel bonded with your baby right away, give it time—these feelings usually grow.

Having a new baby is exciting, but it can also be hard. Don't expect that everything will be perfect. Be patient with yourself, your baby, and your partner.





DAD'S ROLE IN FEEDING

BREASTFEEDING

If you want to give your child a great start in life and your partner is able to breastfeed, your encouragement can make a big difference.

Nutritional value for baby:

- Has the perfect combination of proteins, fats, vitamins, and carbs.
- Helps build brain and immune system.
- Fewer colds, infections, and allergies.
- Reduced risk for obesity.

Benefits for you:

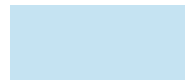
- It's free.
- It's convenient.
- Breastfeeding doesn't need preparation or cleanup. It is always the right temperature and ready for your baby.
- Breastfeeding builds a close bond between mother, father, and baby.

FORMULA FEEDING

There are many different formulas on the market and paying more is no guarantee of better results for your child. Do some research with your partner.

Bottle nipples have different flow rates. You might have to experiment depending on how fast your baby likes the formula to come through.

If you think your baby is prone to allergies or is reacting to the formula, talk to your baby's pediatrician before changing formulas.



TALK TO YOUR PARTNER ABOUT BREASTFEEDING

- Dads can make a big difference by providing support and understanding to their partner. Your emotional support makes it easier. Tell your partner you're proud!
- The more supportive you are to your baby's mom, the longer she will be able to breastfeed and feel confident about breastfeeding.
- Watch your baby nurse. Just sit and be with them and soon you'll see that breastfeeding is more than just feeding.
- Breastfeeding—and just feeding in general—can be time consuming. Be prepared that feeding will take time, and don't rush it.

Q PRO-TIP

Whether your baby is breastfeeding or formula feeding, make sure to get a lot of skin-to-skin contact time. Skin-to-skin contact, or “skin time,” is an important way for both moms and dads to build a strong relationship with their new baby. Cuddling, bathing, burping, or laying your baby on your chest while he or she naps are just a few ways to bond.

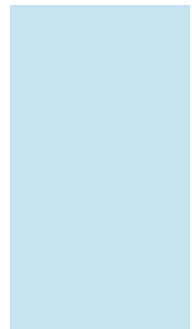


SLEEP

- Babies need sleep for physical growth, to allow their immune systems to develop, and to recharge and develop their brains.
- Babies aren't born with the ability to tell the difference between night and day. This develops over time during the first six months.
- Newborns up to three months can sleep about 16 to 20 hours in a day.
- The safest position for babies to sleep is on their back. This reduces the chance of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

PRO-TIP

Never sleep with your baby in your bed since it increases the chance for accidental suffocation. Babies can sleep safely in their own bassinet or crib in the same room as you.



SIGNS YOUR BABY IS TIRED

- Pulling at ears
- Clenching fists
- Fluttering eyelids
- Jerky arm and leg movements
- Yawning
- A worried look on your child's face
- Arching backwards
- Trouble focusing
- Sucking on fingers

SUGGESTIONS THAT MAY HELP YOUR BABY (AND YOU) SLEEP BETTER AT NIGHT

- Keep your baby calm and quiet when you feed or change him or her during the night.
- Make daytime playtime and nighttime quiet time. This will keep your baby awake longer and help your baby sleep for longer periods during the night.
- Put your baby to bed when drowsy but still awake so that your baby can learn to fall asleep on his or her own.
- Wait a few minutes before responding to your baby's fussing to see if he or she can fall back asleep on their own.

If you feel like you've tried everything and are still struggling with a baby who has difficulties with sleeping, you can call Fussy Baby Network at 888-431-BABY(2229).



CRYING & WHAT DADS CAN DO TO HELP

BABIES USUALLY CRY BECAUSE THEY...

- Are hungry
- Have a dirty diaper
- Need sleep
- Want to be held
- Have tummy troubles
- Need to burp
- Are too cold or too hot
- Are bothered by something small (like scratchy clothes)
- Are teething
- Want less stimulation
- Want more stimulation
- Aren't feeling well

Q PRO-TIP

If you've checked on everything and your baby is still crying, you can try these suggestions from other dads:

- Play background noise. You can play some gentle music or download a "white noise" app on your phone. (Not too loud though!)
- Go for a walk or a drive. Many babies love gently rocking back and forth.
- Sing something. Don't worry if you can't carry a tune! It's not often you get such a tolerant audience.
- Talk quietly to your baby. The sound of your voice is soothing.
- Rock or walk with your baby. Gentle movement and body contact will comfort them.
- Swaddle your baby in a large, thin blanket so they feel secure and warm. Swaddling involves wrapping a baby snugly in a blanket, like a little baby burrito. (Note: do not add salsa.) There are great resources for how to swaddle a baby on YouTube!

WHEN YOUR BABY'S CRYING DOESN'T STOP

Never shake your baby. This can cause permanent blindness, brain damage, or death.

It can be frustrating when your baby won't stop crying. If you feel yourself getting angry, take a time-out and see if somebody you trust can take over for a while, or put your baby down in a safe place (like a crib) for a little bit.

Call you baby's doctor or nurse hotline to see if they have suggestions.

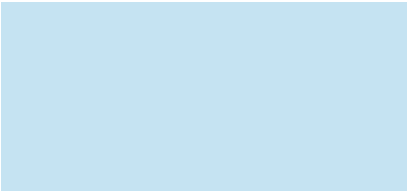
If you feel like you've tried everything and are still struggling with a baby who is crying excessively, you can call Fussy Baby Network at 888-431-BABY(2229).



COLIC

Babies younger than 5 months can sometimes get colic. It's crying that lasts a really long time, and no matter what you do, it won't stop. With colic, you can feed them, swaddle them, rock them, sing, dance, and stand on your head... and they just keep crying.

Having colic doesn't mean your baby is sick or has a disease. Babies with colic are just as healthy as other babies—they just cry more. It doesn't last forever. Most babies cry less by the time they are 3 to 5 months old.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Ask a pediatrician for advice and to make sure there's no medical reason for the crying.
- If your partner is nursing, see if she is willing to try to eliminate milk products, caffeine, onions, cabbage, and any other potentially irritating foods from her own diet.
- If you're feeding formula to your baby, a food sensitivity could be causing your baby's discomfort. Talk to your pediatrician about switching to a different formula.
- Don't overfeed your baby. Try waiting at least 2 hours from the start of one feeding to the start of the next one.
- Try using a pacifier.
- Lay your baby tummy-down across your knees and gently rub his or her back.

IT'S OKAY TO PUT YOUR BABY DOWN

Crying doesn't hurt babies. Babies can sense your frustration and anger so they might even end up crying and fussing more.

It can be hard to put down a crying baby, but sometimes it's the best thing for both of you. Just make sure you put him or her in a safe place (like a crib).



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

MICHILD

Genesee County
Health Department
G-3373 S. Saginaw Street
Burton, MI 48529
(810) 257-3039

GENESEE HEALTH SYSTEM

(Formerly Genesee Community
Mental Health)
420 W. Fifth Avenue
Flint, MI 48503
(810) 257-3705
Crisis Services, Child and
Family Services, Adult
Services & Community Health
Center, Substance Abuse

HEARTBEAT

320 E. Fourth Street
Flint, MI 48502
(810) 232-3101
Offers diapers, formula,
baby clothing, and furniture.
ID and child's Medicaid card
is needed for services.

MOTT CHILDREN'S HEALTH CENTER

806 Tuuri Place
Flint, MI 48503
(810) 767-5750
Children's health services

CHILD CARE NETWORK OF GENESEE COUNTY

412 S. Saginaw St.
Suite 302
Flint, MI 48502
(810) 407-7285
Help families find and pay for
quality childcare

STRIVE

1108 Lapeer Rd.
Flint, MI 48503
(810) 232-5661
Flintstrive.com
Employment training
and support

INVOLVED DAD

(313) 757-1388

Involveddad.org

Father-centered peer support group

ONLINE

Babycenter.com

Babble.com

Daddyplace.com

Fatherhood.org

Involveddad.org

Newparent.com

Parenthelp123.org

Parenthood.com

Parents.com

WebMD.com

Zerothreethree.org

Healthy Start is a group of organizations (Genesee County Health Department, Hurley Medical Center, and Ascension at Home) working together to help moms, dads, and babies with various health-related needs. We help parents who are pregnant and/or have children ages 0-18 months who live in Genesee County. The Genesee County Healthy Start is a member of the National Healthy Start Association.



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School of Social Work and
Parenting in Context Research Lab



www.ParentinginContext.org

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