

# REMEMBERING TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Being a new mother can be an overwhelming experience at times.

## REMEMBER!

- It takes time to adjust to being a new parent.
- It is just as important to take care of yourself as it is to take care of your baby.
- There is no right or wrong way to parent! It's all about working out what is right for you.
- Constantly remind yourself of the many things you have already achieved and done well.

**Get support!** Involve your partner, friends, parents, other family members in the day-to-day care of your baby from the beginning. While you may be independent and find it hard to accept help, it's also a good idea to make the most of help when it's offered. Consider speaking to a health professional or join a parent group. Don't be afraid to call a postnatal depression support service or mental health crisis line if things are getting tough and other help is not available.

**Get rest!** Take every available opportunity to nap or rest quietly – when the baby is asleep or when partners, family members and friends can help with the baby. Having a good night's sleep is important for maintaining good health, but can be difficult with a new baby. It often helps to try to get the baby into a good sleeping pattern as early as possible. Speak to your child health nurse about sleep settling strategies for your baby.

**Keep healthy!** Plan to exercise several times a week – this can be as simple as taking your baby for a walk in the pram or stroller. Try to maintain a healthy diet. You

may find that your appetite changes and it is important to eat (at least) small snacks regularly and include staple foods such as fruit and vegetables, milk, wholegrain bread and lots of water.

**Don't bottle your feelings!** Discuss things that are difficult with a partner, family member or friend. Sit down and talk through the difficulties and try to reach a solution together. Learn to recognise your stress levels and seek help from your doctor or child and family health nurse if the feelings persist.

**Make time for you!** Arrange for a childcare service, friends or family members to look after your baby/child occasionally. Use the time to do what you enjoy such as having 'alone time', reading a book, having a bath, listening to music, watching your favourite TV show or spending time with your partner or a friend.

**Consider the needs of your family!** Friends and family may want to visit you more often than usual but don't feel that you need to entertain endlessly or take their advice! Follow your own instincts and discuss any problems with a health professional, such as your doctor or child and family health nurse.

Remember to contact your doctor or child and family health nurse if you are experiencing difficulties.

**You may find some useful resources on the following websites:**

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)  
[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)  
[www.panda.org.au](http://www.panda.org.au)

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