Adjusting to Parenting

Becoming a parent brings excitement, apprehension, and major changes to your life. Each family adjusts to the addition of a new person in a unique way. Looking ahead to what will happen to your body and emotions after delivery will help you prepare for the ups and downs of the first few months of being a parent.

P = Parenting styles. We are not born with parenting skills; they are learned and fine-tuned over time. We are all influenced by how we were raised and by past and current experiences. Think about how your parents raised you and your siblings, and look at friends and relatives who are parents. What do you like or dislike? Discuss with your partner what you think will work well with your new family. Most important, remember that there is no “perfect” parent.

A = Adjustment. Adjusting to a new baby may be more stressful than adjusting to a new job or marriage. Life will never be quite the same. You will redefine who you are (mother or father) and you will find that you are expected to put your baby’s needs before yours. Caring for a totally dependent infant may feel like a heavy burden at times. It is common to feel that your life revolves only around feeding, changing and soothing your newborn. But the joy and rewards of being a new parent will help you through this.

R = Responsibilities. With the demands of a new baby you may feel that you have less time for your partner, other children, or yourself. Deciding what must be done now and what can be left for later will help you deal with the day-to-day time schedule. Get help with normal household duties and concentrate on the baby and yourselves at first. To help things go smoothly, plan ahead (before baby is born) to stock the house, make a few easy-to-thaw-and-cook meals, and arrange for day care.

E = Emotions. Your emotions for your partner may become deeper as you see your partner with the baby. Or you may find yourself resentful at what you see as unequal duties (for example, “I’m with the baby all day” or “I have to work all day.”) This is normal. Talk to each other, nourish your relationship. You both need to be there for each other and for your child as he or she grows up.

N = Nutrition. You need time to care for yourself so that you can care for your newborn. This is not a time to diet and work on slimming down. A proper diet will help you to regain strength and get your energy level back. Be sure to keep nutritious snacks handy and avoid junk food.

T = Time/Tired. It is normal at first to feel exhilarated and have a difficult time sleeping due to concerns and responsibilities running through your mind. Your newborn will be up frequently for feedings and may even get days and nights mixed up. Plan on napping when the baby naps. Reduce household demands by accepting help and doing only necessary chores. Concentrate on yourself and the baby. Make sure to schedule time away for yourself and with your partner.
I = Information. Parenting is learned “on the job” one day at a time. Your baby is your best teacher. Your baby’s health care provider, books, magazines, and parenting videos are good resources. Parenting classes and young parent support groups in your community may be helpful.

N = Newborn time. Take time to get to know your baby. Life needs to move at a slower pace as the parent/newborn bonds begin to deepen. A “this too shall pass” and “don’t sweat the little things” attitude helps in the tough times. Take time for pictures and to enjoy each stage your child is growing through.

G = Grandparents. Grandparents often love to be involved. They can provide tremendous support for you and your children. Gently let them know you appreciate their advice, but trust your instincts and what you have learned in this class.

How will your day change after the baby is born?
Here are the activities you probably do now, plus new ones you will add to your day once the baby is born. As you plan your days, this chart will help you think about which things must be done, which can be put off, which you’ll need help with, and so forth. Some activities will always be part of your plan, while others may change from day to day.

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem. Aurora Health Care is a not-for-profit health care provider and a national leader in efforts to improve the quality of health care.