

An
Easy-to-Read
Booklet
for
Grandparents



Grandparent Time

Brought to you by Parent Help Line at St. John's Children's Hospital

Grandparents are Special

Being a grandparent is fun. You enjoy watching your child learn new tasks. You hear awe when she says, "How did you do this?"

What is your role as a grandparent? Your role is to help the new mom and dad begin *their* journey as parents.

Give them support:

- Accept their decisions – baby's name, health choices, clothes, choice of feeding. Be available to help when they seek your ideas.
- Realize that what worked for you may not work for them.
- Take their ideas seriously. They will change as needed– just like yours did.
- Celebrate their new role – *their* moment. Resist the temptation to relive your experiences.
- Know that your role as a parent and an in-law may differ. Allow for those differences.

Share your joy and your pride. Be positive with a "You can do it!" message.



Grandparents Provide Support

Being a new parent may overwhelm your child. Look after the new parents.

Respect the New Parents' Privacy

Some new parents want help during the first week after their baby's birth. Others need time alone at first, and then want help. *Ask* what works best for them.

Spend Your Time and Energy in Helping with Specific Tasks and Needs.

This gives the new mom or dad time to:

- Bond with the baby as they provide care.
- Adjust to meeting the baby's needs.
- Create their new lifestyle - as parents.

Help with Routine Chores

- Provide meals.
- Do laundry and ironing.
- Clean – if it is what “mom” wants. Do not make critical remarks about her housekeeping.
- Answer the phone and door while you are with the family.
- Run errands if needed.
- Offer to babysit.

Listen to the Parents' Concerns.

- Stay calm. Offer kind words. *Do not be offended* when they express anger and frustration.
- Let them know you will help when needed. They just need to ask.

Build Self-confidence

- Respect their opinions and decisions – even if they differ from yours. Offer advice *only* when mom or dad asks.
- **Do not criticize.**
- Praise mom and dad as they care for their baby.
- Tell them their baby is lucky to have them as parents.
- Reassure them that they are doing a good job.

Support Mom's Feeding Decision

If mom decides to breastfeed:

- Provide praise. Expect her to succeed.
- Reassure her when she feels stressed.
- Ask her to call the Breastfeeding Warm Line – 217-535-3983 for questions or concerns.

Breast-fed newborns must nurse 8–12 times in 24 hours. Mom's milk supply increases with each feeding.

- Let mom nurse the baby at night. You can rock the baby to sleep after the feeding.
- Help keep track of the baby's milk intake. Watch for wet and soiled diapers. After 5 days, the newborn should have at least 6-8 wet diapers a day. He may have 3-4 yellow, seedy stools every 24 hours.

Encourage breastfeeding - but do not make mom feel guilty if she chooses to bottlefeed.



Update Your Parenting Skills

Parenting has changed. Know how to keep your grandchild safe in bed, in a moving vehicle and in your home. Read books, magazines and the Internet.

Keep up on current parenting trends. Find easy-to-read parenting tips at www.parenthelpline.org. Visit our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/Parent Help Line](http://www.facebook.com/ParentHelpLine) at St. John's Children's Hospital. Call 744-2229 for dates and times of the *Joy of Grandparents* class at St. John's Children's Hospital.

Help Baby Sleep Safe and Sound

Newborns sleep 10 – 20 hours a day. Make sure your grandchild sleeps safely.

Do not use old or drop-side cribs. They are dangerous. These cribs have been linked to infant deaths.

New federal crib standards include:

- No drop side cribs,
- Stronger wood slats spaced less than 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches,
- Anti-loosening devices on crib hardware,
- More durable mattress supports and
- Increased safety testing.

For naps and at night:

- Put baby to sleep on his back.
- Take *all* toys, soft objects, sheepskins and bumpers out of baby's crib.
- Never let baby sleep lying on a sofa, chair or bed with others.
- Dress baby so she does not get too warm while sleeping.

Go to www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/5030.html for more crib safety tips.

Keep Baby Safe While Riding in a Vehicle

Every year car crashes hurt or kill thousands of kids. Child safety seats save lives. **Make sure your child safety seat is properly installed in the back seat of your vehicle.** Go to www.buckleupillinois.org to locate a car seat fitting station.

New car seat rules require all infants and toddlers to ride in a rear-facing car safety seat. They must do this until they have reached the weight and height limits of their car seat. This includes an infant-only rear-facing car seat. It also includes a rear-facing convertible car seat. Call 1-866-247-0213 or 558-0568 to schedule a free car seat check.

Avoid used car seats. They may not be safe. To learn why, go to www.babycenter.com. Type in "car seat safety."

Keep Baby Safe at Your Home

Welcome baby into your safe and baby-friendly home.

- If possible, have a safe crib/bed, high chair, and stroller in your home.
- Stock up on basic baby supplies like diapers, baby wipes, clothes, and blankets.
- Do not allow smoking around the baby.
- Be aware of pet risks to the baby.
- Learn facts about lead poisoning.
- Keep purses, household cleaners, chemicals and medicines out of baby's reach. Call the Illinois Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 for questions or concerns.





Read to Your Grandchild

Help your grandchild develop good language skills. Read together often.

- Make eye contact with her as you read.
- Read a few minutes at a time for a total of 20 minutes per day.
- Read anything at first. However, babies do like nursery rhymes and songs.
- Cuddle as you read.
- Read with feelings.
- Point to pictures.
- Let him touch the book.

Provide Tummy Time While Baby is Awake

Newborns need 5 minutes of supervised “tummy time” twice a day. Babies who spend too much time on their backs may have problems and delays.

- Use a car seat *only* when baby is in a car.
- Place baby on her tummy after naps, diaper changes and feedings. Play on the floor or a table with her.
- Gently roll baby from side to side as you dress and diaper him.
- Vary the ways you hold your baby. Sometimes, carry baby with his head resting on your shoulder. Alternate shoulders. Support his head. Other times, hold and carry baby facing baby away from you.

Watch for Post Partum Depression

You may be the most likely to notice symptoms of postpartum depression (PPD). Symptoms include:

- Sleeping too little or too much.
- A lack of interest in the baby.
- Changes in appetite.
- Crying spells, sadness.
- Fatigue.
- Mood swings, bad temper.

While PPD is most common in moms, dads can also have PPD. They are more likely to develop PPD if their wife suffers from it.

Postpartum depression can be treated. You can help.

- Encourage mom or dad to call their doctor. Ask about treatment.
- Offer to do chores – meals, laundry, cleaning.
- Babysit so parents can rest, sleep or exercise.

Read *Postpartum Depression – Dealing with Feelings* at www.parenthelpline.org

Help Keep Your Grandchild Healthy

- Wash hands often - before holding baby and after diaper changes.
- Get a Tdap vaccine. It helps protect your grandchild from whooping cough (pertussis).
- Get a yearly flu vaccine.
- Stay away from your newborn grandchild if you are sick.



**Call Parent Help Line at 217-544-5808
or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.
7 days a week for questions and concerns.**



In partnership with the SIU School of Medicine