

## How do I do skin-skin?

- Get comfy, with your arms and back supported, as you could be sitting or lying a while.
- Get baby on your bare chest in just their nappy and cover them with a blanket to keep them warm.
- Hold your baby close, supporting them with both hands.
- Take note of how your baby responds to you, and how they react to things around them.

### Babies Cry – You Can Cope

Crying is one of the many ways your baby communicates and it's an opportunity to think about what their behaviour is telling you...

**I – Infant crying is normal**

**C – Comforting methods can help**

**O – It's OK to walk away**

**N – Never, ever shake a baby**

Speak to someone if you need support such as your family, friends, peer supporter, Midwife, GP or Health Visitor



## Other Useful Resources

### NHS Choice

*Depression and anxiety self-assessment quiz*

### ICON – iconcope.org

*Babies cry, you can cope*

### CRY-SIS – 08451 228669

*National helpline*

### BASIS – basisonline.org.uk

*Baby sleep info source*

### Dad Pad – thedadpad.co.uk/app

*A useful app for dads*

### Baby Buddy App – bestbeginnings.org.uk/baby-buddy

### Refuge – 0808 801 0327

*Men's advice line*

### Shout – 24/7 text SHOUT to 85258

*Text support*

### The Samaritans – 116 123

### Mind – 0300 123 3393

### Calm – thecalmzone.net



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*to mum, to baby, to everyone...*

Supporting dads to have the  
best possible relationships  
with their families



*For more information, please get in touch:*

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dadmatters.org.uk



“ You're the first  
person I've spoken to about  
this and it feels good to be  
able to talk ”

# Dear Dad

This information is for:

If you have any questions or concerns about yours or your child's well-being, please contact me on:

**07483 123652 (Mobile)**

**[charlie.dadmatters@homestart-westsomerset.org.uk](mailto:charlie.dadmatters@homestart-westsomerset.org.uk)**

This leaflet contains information to support you to have the best possible relationship with your family.

You will find tips on bonding with your new baby and why this is so important.

You'll also find signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression in new dads and who you can contact if you have any questions or concerns.

“ You helped more than you will know and got me through a really tough time ”

Who can I contact if I am worried about my relationship with my baby, or my own well-being?

**[dadmatters.org.uk](http://dadmatters.org.uk)**

Your Midwife, Health Visitor or GP,  
Adult Mental Health Services (IAPT) or  
Parent Infant Services (referral needed)

## How can I bond with my new baby?

- Some men find bonding with their baby difficult, **but you don't have to wait until they are born to start!**
- Babies can hear in the womb from about the 18<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. Try talking, singing and reading to your baby, before and after they are born.
- If it feels a bit awkward, try playing your baby your favourite songs, telling them about your hobbies, your work or your ambitions for their future.
- Skin to skin also increases yours and you baby's levels of the hormone oxytocin, which promotes bonding and attachment.
- Carrying your baby in your arms or a sling/carrier can also help you to learn their cues and become more reactive to their signals, helping you to get to know them better.

## How can I help my baby's brain development?

- Baby's parents help them build their brain into a strong and stable blueprint for the future.
- Your baby's brain wiring (neural pathways) is around 20% connected when they are born.
- How well that wiring develops can affect the way they communicate, handle problems and how they learn.
- It can also impact their relationships and physical and emotional health when they become adults.
- Consistent, positive and loving relationships help your baby's brain to grow and lower the effects of stress.
- Babies are primed to look for two way interaction with their care givers, including touch, facial expressions and conversation. When you respond to their cues, you are literally helping them to build positive brain connections.
- Responding to your baby, especially when they are upset or sick, and providing them with a safe, supportive and loving relationship is also important.

## Why is my mental health and well-being so important for my baby?

When a parent experiences poor mental health it can affect the way they respond to, bond with and care for their child. This can impact the child's psychological, intellectual, social and emotional development.

## What is the likelihood of developing mental health issues as a new dad?

In England, *1 in 8 men* experience depression, anxiety, panic disorders or obsessive compulsive disorder.

Postnatal depression affects *1 in 10 dads*.

Peak time for men to develop postnatal depression is *3-6 months* following the birth, but symptoms can come on anytime in the first few years of being dad.

*Signs to look for can include one or more of:*

- Insomnia
- Fear/panic
- Confusion
- Feelings of helplessness
- Uncertainty about the future
- Withdrawal from family life, work and social events
- Indecisiveness
- Great risk taking
- Frustration/anger
- Irritability
- Cynicism
- Negative parenting behaviours
- Increased alcohol use
- Drug use
- Partner conflict
- Loss of interest in sex or erectile dysfunction
- Physical symptoms like headaches, nausea, indigestion, changes in appetite and weight, diarrhea, constipation and toothaches

