

S.O.S.!

(SAVE OUR SANITY!)

Help for New Moms and Dads

Becoming a parent changes everything – everything! – and nothing can truly prepare you for the effect that your little bundle of joy will have on your life. Fortunately, there are more resources available now than ever before to make your transition into parenthood go as smoothly as possible. We've compiled the following possibilities for helping new and prospective parents navigate those first few months in Baby Land.

Get a Handle on the Gear

Even before baby arrives, purchasing the vast array of baby products you need can be an overwhelming process. How do you wade through the thousands of items and brands to find what you actually need?

Melissa Moog was so baffled by baby gear she asked her sister-in-law to fly in from out of town to accompany her to the big box baby store. "I had no idea where to start," says Moog, who lives in Portland. "I was doing all this research on the Internet, reading tons of books, tons of magazines and I couldn't believe how much work it was just to kind of get myself educated." With the help of her sister-in-law, Moog completed the unwieldy task of registering for shower gifts, but she couldn't help thinking, "Wouldn't it be great if there was a personal shopper or consultant that new moms could talk to, to help understand how to navigate the world of baby?"

That question led Moog to start itsabelly Baby Concierge, a business that offers all manner of advice and assistance to new and prospective parents. She helped Cedar Mill mom-to-be Roxanne Gryder conquer the baby gear dilemma by sharing books, articles and tips, then having Gryder complete a diagram of her proposed nursery, complete with measurements, to bring shopping. "It ended up being a much quicker and easier and less stressful experience doing the (baby shower) registry because I had someone there to give me expert advice as I was going through each item," says Gryder. "I didn't have to agonize over 20 different brands to determine what we needed."

Enlist Assistance

After you have a baby, nearly everyone you know will offer to help. Let them! Better yet, line up assistance in advance. While timing can be tricky because babies rarely arrive as scheduled, Moog suggests staggering your helpers to extend your resources. If your mom is coming for the baby's birth, for example, ask your sister to wait until mom leaves and schedule a friend to come after that.

If an army of family and friends isn't a viable option, consider a postpartum doula. "I had a doula from Mother Tree Birth Services for a month (after my baby was born)," says Moog. "She came to my house a few hours a week and helped me with the baby and light cleaning and I could go off and do my errands or just give myself a break." Many new parents are surprised by the range of services a postpartum doula can provide, from showing you the basics of baby-care and watching the baby while you take a break, to making lunch for mom and doing a load a laundry.

Cindy Carney, pictured here with her husband and son, highly recommends seeking help from a lactation specialist if needed.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CARNEY FAMILY

By Emily Puro

Another option, offered free to first time parents (regardless of income) throughout Oregon, is the Healthy Start program. This state-funded effort provides parents with a "welcome baby" kit full of information and resources. Some parents are eligible for home visits from trained professionals. While the

visitors won't do your laundry, they will offer information on healthy infant development and other parenting topics. See "Help for New Moms and Dads – Resources" on page 26 for contact information.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MELISSA MOOG

Melissa Moog and the inspiration for her business, itsabelly Baby Concierge.

Don't Battle with Breastfeeding

The benefits of breastfeeding are well known – from exceptional nutrition to enhanced immunity and beyond – and many new moms anticipate an easy transition to breastfeeding after baby is born. After all, what could be more natural? Sadly, it's not always as simple as it seems. When Vancouver, Wash., mom Cindy Carney delivered her baby by Caesarian section, she was surprised to learn how many factors could negatively influence her milk supply. Encouraged to supplement with bottles at the hospital, Carney continued to struggle once she arrived home. After two months, she was beyond frustrated but unwilling to give up. Her doctor referred her to lactation specialist Karen Roeske of Bellies, Babies and Breasts, PC, a service she was pleased to learn was covered by her insurance.

While many hospitals and physicians' practices offer lactation assistance, Roeske provides the added benefit of making house calls. "I really feel like I needed someone to come to my house," says Carney. "It was overwhelming thinking about going out. It was great because she just would show up and we were in our own routine and she could just observe. I didn't even have to shower." Many postpartum doulas also offer lactation assistance in your home.

To make sure you get off to a great start, see a lactation consultant before you leave the hospital. She can show you how to get comfortable in different nursing positions and make sure your baby is latching on correctly so you don't experience difficulty in the weeks and months to come.

Manage Meals

With feeding the baby a number one priority, many new parents forget about feeding themselves, but mom and dad need nourishment, too. Some new parents receive help from friends, relatives and neighbors, and the best time to coordinate that help is at your baby shower. Whether you subtly suggest a "meal assembly" shower, where guests meet at one of the area's numerous meal assembly venues to prepare freezer meals together, or you ask a friend to coordinate a cooking calendar where guests can sign up to deliver meals after the baby is born (see www.lotsahelpinghands.com for an online calendar tool), many new moms find this community feeding strategy to be a lifesaver during the first few weeks of parenthood.

A personal chef service is another option. The typical approach with these businesses is for the client to choose from a variety of entrees, which the personal chef then prepares in the client's home and freezes. Lake Oswego-based What's for Dinner? takes the personal chef concept a step further, preparing the meals at their facility and delivering them to your door.

Even if you don't enlist help, a visit to a local meal assembly shop prior to your baby's arrival can help fill your freezer, or simply freeze meals at home for a month or two before you'll need them. Grocery chains from Safeway to New Seasons offer delivery services and organic produce delivery businesses like Pioneer Organics can also help out. The occasional meal from Delivered Dish, which brings menu items from a number of local restaurants (www.d-dish.com) to your home could be a worthwhile splurge.

Get Out

Being a new parent can be so overwhelming that the simple act of getting dressed and out of the house often feels unmanageable – but it's important that you do get out, and often. Moms' groups offer a comfortable way to get out with baby in tow, with the added benefit of sharing the joys and woes of new parenthood with other moms in the same boat. But getting out on your own is important, too. Simply taking a walk can do wonders to clear your sleep-deprived mind and rejuvenate your spirit.

For Portland-area parents, Moog suggests a visit to Zenana Spa. "They have childcare at the spa," she says, "so you can drop your baby off and get a massage, a pedicure, whatever you want to relax." Mommy matinees at McMenamins and "crying rooms" at other local theaters are another great option for baby-friendly outings. "You can't really pay attention to the movie," says Moog, "but you're out."

Get Fit

While you're out, why not get some exercise? It's hard to imagine

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Healthy Start

For you and your first baby!



Healthy Start provides information, resources and support to new parents parenting their first child and helping to give each baby a healthy start. All services are voluntary and free. Income does not matter.

Services for first time parents include:

- Information on community resources, such as child care, breastfeeding support, car seat installation, etc...
- Parenting Classes, Parenting support and information
- Healthy Start personal home visits for some first-time parents and children including developmental information and screenings
- Parent-child play groups (Clackamas County)



Clackamas County: 503-546-6533
www.clackamasfamilies.org

Multnomah County: 503-988-5055 x29770
www.mchealth.org/services/chs.shtml#connections

Washington County: 503-846-4534
www.ohdc.org/npn.html

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Planning for baby's arrival.

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Some of the Services We Offer:

- Planning and designing your baby's nursery with a personal touch & style
- Organizing your baby registry by selecting the best baby gear based on your lifestyle needs
- Finding the best pre & post natal services like doulas, fitness classes and photographers
- Finding eco-friendly and organic baby and mama products
- Private cooking lessons on making healthy, homemade baby food
- Babyproofing your home

Contact: melissa@itsa-belly.com
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