



“Ready. Set. Go!”  
First Days at Home With a Newborn

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Life has some defining moments. One of my life’s defining moments happened as I was leaving the hospital with my newborn son. I could feel panic rising in my throat. I secretly hoped that the calm, competent nurse holding my son would be getting in the car with us.

Pain, fatigue, and worry can make homecoming with a newborn a very scary experience. Don’t spend those first precious days in a state of panic. Yes, you can actually enjoy your newborn.

Here are a few simple tips to help ease stress those first days at home with your new baby:

1. Lower your expectations. In general, your baby will not eat, sleep or do anything exactly the way the books tell you. You will be more tired and sore than you expected. Your baby will pee, poop and spit up more than you expected. That seven pound wonder will produce more laundry than you thought possible.
2. Limit visitors. Fight the urge to show off that baby to everyone you know. It requires too much energy to entertain, and caring for the baby can be a nerve wracking experience in front of well-meaning visitors.
3. Drink fluids. Rest. Drink fluids. Rest. Repeat. A new mother needs extra fluids. New parents need extra rest. This is not the time to scrub floors, make complicated meals, or tackle a work project on your lap top. Lay your head down on a pillow every chance you get.
4. Ask for help. Why does my baby nurse so long and so often? Why does my baby only sleep for twenty minutes at a time? Call your pediatrician’s office or a trusted friend or family member who has baby experience. A little reassurance can go a long way toward a peaceful homecoming.
5. Cuddling is highly under rated. A newborn cannot be spoiled by too much attention. These first days at home are not the time to put the baby on a rigid sleeping and eating schedule. You will have plenty of time for that later. Take cues from your baby. Meet the baby’s needs as they arise.
6. Crying is normal. (For both mother and baby!) A screaming newborn can be very unnerving. Crying is the only means of communicating a newborn has available to them. Diaper changes, hunger, and over stimulation are only a few of the reasons a newborn will cry. Don’t panic. Swaddle your baby and calmly determine your baby’s needs. Call someone for help if your baby cannot be soothed.

Relax. Relax. Relax. Newborns grow and change DAILY! Don’t spend those first precious days with your newborn by being stressed and anxious. Ask questions, get plenty of rest, lower your expectations, and cuddle your newborn. Enjoy your newborn; tomorrow they will be off to college!

**Susan Huebner, Nurturing Newborns**

Susan Huebner is a newborn specialist and owner of Nurturing Newborns, a service that provides help and education in caring for newborns.