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Preparing For Baby: Strategies, Tools, and Tips for First Time Grandmothers

By Theresa V. Wilson

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Preparing for baby is an exciting process that can be as unique as childbirth for first time grandmothers. Once you recover from the initial shock that your baby is no longer your baby, it's time to get mentally and physically prepared to offer proactive support to both mommy and daddy from the beginning of the pre-birth process until the end of the new mom's recuperation phase. It is truly more than preparing for baby showers, opening gifts, and recording cards.

It all begins with the announcement. From the moment you're told you are about to be a grandparent, nothing is the same. My husband and I received our announcement on Christmas Day. Our daughter and son-in-law came to the living room of their home to say "the test was positive, congratulations grand mom". A new life had formed, a child was in the wings. The excitement is indescribable. It is one of many times you realize that it is only through the power of God that such a miracle would be possible. The months of preplanning begins by encouraging the mom to eat and sleep properly, initiate planning the baby shower with save the date cards, helping to monitor gift registries and coordinating materials that would be useful after the baby is born. Even selection of what the mom and baby would wear on their first trip home is reminiscent of the bridal planning process.

There are several issues, however, that are often overlooked during the preparation phase. The future Grandmother needs to be proactive about getting ready for the level of hands on input and support that will be needed from her before, during, and after the birth. Essential elements of grandmother preparation should include one of several things:

ØWatching your diet, taking vitamins, starting an exercise program - you could be "actively" involved in the birthing process. I was part of the designated support team and, as such, participated in the breathing exercises, hand holding and offering the gentle conversations my daughter needed while experiencing labor pains. In addition to singing songs, stroking her head with a wet cloth throughout the process, I reminded her of scripture verses that she could use as a source of her strength including "I look beyond the hills from which cometh my strength. My help comes from the Lord who made both

heaven and earth". (Psalm 121:1–2 KJV)

Being prepared with a CD player or recorder for playing favorite her favorite music and other inspirational messages can be very helpful in providing comfort at the most strenuous moments. The Grandmother's role is pivotal for both the new mom and dad and she must be physically up to the challenge even in early hours of the day. The best time to get ready physically is before you are needed. A nine month low impact aerobic or regular walking routine will make a world of difference during a 10–20 hour labor.

ØTaking time to refresh your knowledge about pregnancy and birth - Especially if you are going to be part of the child birthing process, a brief refresher of what to expect would be helpful. Your daughter will look to you at various points of the process for your reassurance. It would be helpful if you are able to use terminology she learned during the birthing preparation classes to let her know you are aware of

what she is experiencing and can relate with up to date information.

ØSetting aside at least two to three weeks time - Being available to spend or be on call to help the new mom during the recuperation and adjustment period is an invaluable gift your daughter will never forget. Sleep schedules, adjusting to feeding, doctor's appointments, stabilizing meal schedules, addressing unexpected emergencies, doctor's visits, and helping with general lifestyle changes all make a difference between smooth and traumatic transition. The significance of your presence during this time cannot be measured.

ØScheduling "readiness" packing—Do not wait until your daughter is heading to the hospital to pack items as you may be asked to stay with mom and dad at the hospital overnight. Be sure to include dried fruit, juice, peppermints, and other light refreshments you can use during break times. Our team took turns sleeping and eating during the 17 hours my daughter was in labor. We prepared a food kit that included toothbrush, wash cloth, music for her comfort, and fresh fruit. Unfortunately, hospital machines offer carbonated soda and potato chips that are uninviting during the early morning hours.

Another preplanning strategy you should consider is talking to the new mom and dad about what they may need from you after birth of the child. Often new parents don't consider the need for help until the issue arises. By initiating this conversation, new parents have the option to consider whether there is a need for help for one or two weeks to support a variety of issues including monitoring phone calls and visitors, helping with home chores, washing clothes, and preparing meals. These are a few of their favorite things.

Participating in the birth of your first grandbaby will mark a moment in your life that can only be matched by your daughter's birth. Your role is different this time, but it is pivotal to the joy of your daughter's birthing experience. Congratulations Grandma!!

Theresa V. Wilson, M.Ed. is a Freelance Writer, with over eighty bylines in several business, family and women on and offline publications including Guide to Retirement Living, Godly Business Woman Magazine, The Greater Omaha Parents Journal and a "healthy eating" contribution Lifetime Magazine. She is owner of a home based business dedicated to families and caregivers facing health recovery

and crisis related issues. Visit her site at www.meetingtheneeds.org

Five Reasons For Preparing Your Own Baby Food

By Nancy Miller

Here are 5 good reasons to start preparing your own baby food, as opposed to buying it in the store.

IT'S HEALTHIER AND MORE NUTRITIOUS Commercial baby foods contain additional fat, salt, sugar, fillers or other ingredients that are completely unnecessary (and often inappropriate) to your baby's diet. These additives are an attempt to add flavor, texture and bulk to poor-quality products. They contribute nothing at all to your baby's health or well-being. By preparing the food yourself, you can be sure that your baby is getting exactly what his/her little body needs – and nothing that it doesn't.

YOU'RE IN CONTROL By preparing your baby's food yourself, you know exactly what your baby is eating. When you prepare an apple sauce, you know he/she is getting fresh, pure apple and all the goodness it contains. However, when you buy apple-sauce at the store, you'd almost need a degree in nutrition just to decipher the list of ingredients.

IT'S EASY Once you get started cooking for your baby, you'll quickly realize just how easy it is. All you need is a food blender and some fresh ingredients to quickly prepare healthy, tasty, home-made meals for your little one. Furthermore, by making large amounts of his/her favorite meals in advance, and then freezing them for later, you'll be able to serve up delicious, healthy meals in minutes -- every day of the week.

IT'S MUCH CHEAPER The prices that baby food manufacturers charge for their products is nothing short of scandalous and are in no way justifiable. The reason they can charge so much is because they've conditioned most parents to believe that they have no choice but to buy from them. By preparing your baby's food yourself, you can avoid being a victim of this daylight robbery, and find yourself with extra cash to spend on all those other things that a growing baby needs.

IT'S VERY GRATIFYING Watching your baby enjoy the meal you've just prepared for him/her is already a very gratifying experience. On top of that, however, you have the satisfaction and pride of knowing that you're giving your child the gift of a healthy and nutritious diet – and saving yourself money as well.

And finally...

If all that weren't enough, here's another great reason to do it yourself: home-made baby food is much tastier than any commercial product. Delicious food is one of life's great pleasures and your baby deserves to enjoy the rich flavor and texture of real home cooking just as much as you or I. After all, none of us would enjoy eating 'TV Dinners' morning, noon and night – and that goes for your baby too!

So, don't put it off. Get started today. Your baby will thank you for it in more ways than one.

Nancy.

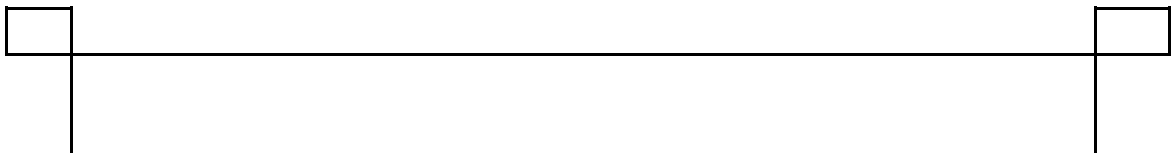
Nancy Miller is author of 'How to Make Your Own Healthy Baby Food' and a full-time working mom. Visit Nancy's website at

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