Being a dad… your most important job!

PREPARATION FOR PARENTING

Is your partner pregnant or are you planning on having children? Being prepared and learning about how to have a healthy lifestyle before getting pregnant can ensure your child has the best start in life.

Useful links:

- Best Start
  "How to build a healthy baby"
- Triple P : Positive Parenting Program
  "Balancing Work and Family"
- Website: http://www.newdadmanual.ca/

TEN IDEAS FOR PLAY

1. Talk to your baby about what's happening around them. It will help them use more words when they start talking. Tell them what you see when you are driving in the car. Point out birds, cars, trains, dogs, etc.

2. Playing outside is a good way for children to use their energy. Walk with your child and talk about the things we see. Let them practice climbing and jumping in a safe place. Play in the sand with buckets and shovels. If it is raining, get dressed and go and jump in puddles!

3. Lie with baby on your tummy. Babies like face to face contact. Encourage baby to lift their head by playing peek-a-boo, make sounds. As baby grows encourage to imitate sounds, facial expressions.

4. Children learn by example. Be a positive role model. Fathers should engage in productive activities with children. Wash dishes, fold laundry, cook or rake the yard. Remember to have fun.

5. Make a fort. Use a sheet and the kitchen table and chairs. You can use your fort to play games in, do a puzzle or pretend you are camping. Having a tea party or picnic in your fort is a great place to have an afternoon snack.

6. Make some music. Get out the pots, pans, containers, and boxes. Use cooking spoons as your drum sticks. Pour some beans in a paper towel roll and tape up the ends… a shaker!

7. Fill the kitchen sink with water. Use containers, funnels and cups to have some water play. Add some bubbles too. Your child may need to stand on a chair to get up to the sink, so please stay close to keep them safe!

8. Plant a garden together inside or out. Collect large plastic cups, dirt and some seeds. Plant the seeds in the cups and place them in your window. Watch them grow!

9. Sit down and read books together. Check out your local library for books too!

10. Build a tower out of blocks.

Children also need to learn how to play and share with each other (other children). Plan an outing to your local library, Best Start Hub and other community activities.

Useful links:

- Father Involvement Initiative - Ontario Network
  Daddy...Come Play With Me (a father's guide to play with young children)
- Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology
  Physical Activity Tips (0-4)
- Public Health Agency of Canada
  Physical Activity Tips (5-11)

THE IMPACT OF BEING A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL

As a parent, you play an importance role in shaping the way your baby will learn, think and behave in the future. Research shows that the relationship between you and your child in the early years is a necessary part of healthy brain development.

> *Children are very perceptive and they watch every move you make. For better or worse, they observe, learn and imitate your behaviors, your actions, your values, your beliefs and even your expressions. It's a fact that children learn vicariously by observing the behavior of others and noting the consequences of their actions. You are in a position of tremendous power in regard to influencing the development of your child. Modeling is important because it is the primary way that children learn the values they will carry for life. Through your actions, your words, your behavior and your love, you can direct your children toward where you want them to go.*
>
> *~ Dr. Phil*

Useful links:

- Parents Action for Children Video (hosted on YouTube)
  The First Years Last Forever

IMPORTANCE OF BEING AN INVOLVED DAD

Children need their fathers, and fathers need their children. The contribution that fathers make to their children is an essential part of a child's healthy development. An involved father enjoys his kids, shares the work of raising them with his partner, and is one who understands his children well. The best way to learn about your kids is to spend time with them, follow your child's lead, and learn more about disciplining in a positive way in order to help your kids behave well. It's never too late to get involved with your kids, there are many opportunities to learn on the job and be a positive role model in the lives of your children.

10 Ways to be an Involved Dad

1. Play with your child
2. Learn to read your child's cues
3. Read to your child
4. Turn the TV off during meal times
5. Respect your child's mother
6. Say "I love you" to your child
7. Listen to your child
8. Laugh with your child
9. Provide for your child's needs
10. Give hugs and kisses

Useful links:

Father Involvement Initiative – Ontario Chapter

- Involved Fathers – A guide for today's Dad
- Full-time Dad, Part-time Kids: A Guide for recently separated and divorced fathers
- Kids We Can Count On: A father's guide to building character in children
- Daddy I need You: A father's guide to early childhood brain development

Father Involvement Research

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Support is an essential tool for being a parent. Dads that feel supported are more likely to stay involved in their children's lives and feel more successful as a parent. Seek out supports through your family, friends, neighbors, community programs or religious gatherings. Check out the link beside your community for a list of resources and parenting programs available.

Atikokan: Community Parenting Programs

Dryden, Ignace & Vermillion Bay Area: Community Parenting Programs

Fort Frances & Emo Area: Community Parenting Programs

Kenora Area: Community Parenting Programs

Sioux Lookout Area: Community Parenting Programs

Ear Falls & Red Lake Area: Community Parenting Programs

Please fill out our survey to evaluate our campaign and help us to support dads better.

Answers are anonymous and confidential.

Northwestern Health Unit

www.nwhu.on.ca