

TIPS PAEDIATRICIANS USE THEMSELVES

Finding first-time parenting tough? Then learn the skills top paediatricians applied to their own bubs. By **Chelsea Clarke**



DR HARRIET HISCOCK, The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne

"My top tip is to try to establish a sleep pattern early on. It's an important part of helping your baby learn to settle. If your baby seems tired, carry him to his cot and cuddle him until he is drowsy but not quite asleep. If he cries, stay with him and pat or stroke him gently until he's calm, but not totally asleep. You can leave the room once he is calm. Go back to the cot and calm your baby again if he starts crying."



DR SCOTT DUNLOP, Sydney Paediatrics

"Every baby feeds differently, there will be good days

and bad, but if your baby is settling well and gaining weight, there is little cause for concern. Feeding a baby is naturally a great focus for new parents, but it can sometimes consume more time than it needs to. Try to back your own natural instincts and judgment, rather than going by the book. Some babies are difficult feeders, so seek help early if you have concerns."

ROBYN DAVIES, Calvary North Adelaide Hospital



"Before you bring your baby home from

hospital for the first time, make sure you have the freezer stocked with handy meals. In those first few weeks and months, have plenty of spill cloths handy, try to keep up with the washing, accept all offers of help and get your sleep when the baby sleeps. Before you venture out for the first time, have a few attempts at collapsing the pram and getting it and the capsule in and out of the car."



CHARLOTTE MIDDLETON, (above) St George Private Hospital, Sydney

"When trying to establish a routine for my two children as newborns, I used some ideas from Gina Ford's book *The New Contented Little Baby Book* (Ebury Press). I think it helped both children, with them needing just one feed overnight, and my three-year-old sleeping through by four months old. I'm yet to see if this will happen with my second! I also like planning our days knowing loosely what the routine is. No routine should be too set in stone, though; it only leads to frustration and guilt when things go awry.

"Dads can often feel left out in those early days, especially if mum is breastfeeding, but there are lots of ways they can help out that will also enhance bonding with their baby and give mum some much-needed rest. Ask dad to pick up the baby when crying, give him the task of changing a few nappies and settling the baby after a feed.

"Don't feel bad about accepting help when it's offered. And always ask for help when you need it. There are lots of community supports you can utilise, like the the national breastfeeding helpline, parenting helplines, Karitane and Tresillian [NSW], early childhood centres, and not to mention your doctor, midwives and paediatrician."

"When you first get home, try to limit visitors – it will give you time to rest and the baby won't be over-handled. Plan only one outing a day, such as grocery shopping or catching up with friends. This doesn't include a walk, which I'd recommend." **b**



PROFESSOR DOMINIC FITZGERALD, Children's Hospital Westmead, Sydney

"The challenge for a new parent is to work out what their baby's cry means. Is it a hunger cry, an irritable cry of a colicky infant or the cry of an unwell baby? One of our boys was very colicky and screamed most nights between one and three months of age. I would rest our son with his tummy pressed against my forearm, which settled him and he'd fall asleep. Alternatively, I remember walking the floor through the night with him resting against my shoulder until we both fell asleep in front of the TV. The first months of baby's life are exciting for parents. Engage with them at every opportunity."

