EziBond Africa

Your first year as a dad

A pocket guide from EziBond Africa

The first year goes fast. You do not need to know everything, and nobody expects you to be perfect. What your baby needs most is you: your voice, your hands and your time. Here is what to expect, and how to help, three months at a time.

Months 0 to 3: getting to know each other

- Hold your baby often, skin to skin when you can. Your smell and your voice become familiar fast.
- Take your share of feeds, diaper changes, baths and burping. Everyday care is how you bond.
- Share the nights. Take a shift so your partner can sleep a few hours in a row.
- Always put your baby to sleep on their back, on a firm, flat surface, in their own sleep space.
- Go to clinic checkups when you can, and keep the vaccination card somewhere safe.

Months 4 to 6: smiles and first laughs

- Get down on the floor and play every day. Give your baby tummy time while they are awake and watched.
- Answer every coo and babble as if you are having a real conversation. You are.
- Read picture books together, even if your baby mostly chews the pages.
- As your baby starts to grab, keep small objects, coins and medicines out of reach.

Months 7 to 9: on the move

- Make your home safe for crawling: cover sockets, block stairs and lock away cleaning products.
- Name everything you see on a walk. “Bus. Goat. Mango tree.”
- Follow your clinic’s advice on starting solid foods, and let your baby explore food with their hands.

Months 10 to 12: first steps, first words

- Celebrate small wins: a new sound, a wobbly step, a first clap.
- Keep routines steady. Babies feel safe when bath, story and bed come in the same order.
- Keep reading every day. It is one of the best gifts you can give.

Look after your partner, and yourself

Feeling tired and emotional in the first weeks is common. But if your partner or you feel low, anxious or hopeless for more than two weeks, or cannot sleep even when the baby sleeps, talk to a doctor. It happens to many parents, mothers and fathers, and help works.

Get help straight away if your baby

- has trouble breathing, or turns blue or gray around the lips
- has a fever and is younger than three months
- is unusually sleepy, floppy or hard to wake
- will not feed, or has far fewer wet diapers than usual
- has a seizure

Go to the nearest clinic or hospital. Trust your instincts. You know your baby.

Never shake a baby. If the crying gets too much, put your baby down safely on their back in the crib, step away for a few minutes and breathe. Then come back, or call someone to help. Every parent reaches that point sometimes.