

# Tips to Reduce Stress and Increase Support

- Know that it is OK to “take time off.” Your rest benefits your baby too.
- Take time to do the normal, enjoyable daily activities you used to do.
- Although providing breastmilk is extremely important, it is also ok to rest. If you need a night off to sleep and re-charge, take one. Your milk supply will be better if you aren't stressed about it.
- Try meditation, deep breathing, and/or progressive muscle relaxation

## Eat healthy and balanced meals

- Try not to eat either too much or too little
- Avoid eating a lot of sugar or other foods that cause you to feel emotional

## Exercise

- Either alone or with friends and family
- There are many different kinds of exercise. Do something you enjoy. Some ideas are hiking, walking, running, yoga, Pilates, or going to the gym
- Do some sort of exercise every day, even if it only walking.

**Before beginning an exercise regimen, check with your doctor.**



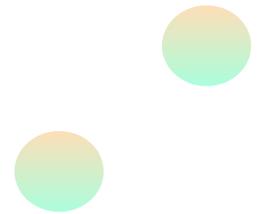
## Talk to your friends and family

- Let them help you. ASK for support
- Don't be shy to tell them what **is** helpful and what **isn't**
- Ask them if they want to come visit your baby with you
- Be open and honest with your partner. Talk about how you are feeling



## Treat yourself

- Take a bath
- Get a massage
- Have a date night
- Watch a movie or read a good book



## If you have other children

- Answer their questions honestly and simply
- Make sure they know that they did not do anything to cause the baby to be born early
- Talk with them about their feelings
- Show them special and unique characteristics of their sibling with pictures
- Make pictures, audio, or video recordings with them to bring to the baby
- Set aside time just for them



## Rest and Sleep

- Go to bed only when tired, and try to relax before bedtime
- Get out of bed when you're unable to sleep.  
If you are not asleep within half an hour, do something relaxing until you feel sleepy again
- Use the bed/bedroom for sleep only (no reading, watching TV, etc.)
- Try your best to go to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every morning
- Find more information at: [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)

### If you are having trouble sleeping, here are some tips for improving your sleep:

- It is okay to take a break from breastfeeding to get a good night's sleep when you really need it; your rest benefits your baby too
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol later in the day
- Exercise, but not within three hours of bedtime
- Establish a consistent sleep-wake schedule

