



New Baby, Old Chores

How to “get things done” with a new baby in the house

By Judy Arnall

The house is bursting with laundry everywhere. Half folded piles lie on the sofa, and toppled over piles scatter the floor. The cupboards are empty of clean dishes and counters are full of the dirty ones. You have not showered yet and are still wearing last week’s sleepwear. Baby is crying and having “one of those days”, yet the effort to get dressed, go out and get away from it all is overwhelming. The frustration of having piles of work displayed around you is a constant reminder of how little control you have over your life right now.

Having a new baby is hard for parents that are used to organization, control, efficiency and order. Well-intended people say to relax, focus on the baby and enjoy this time, but it’s really difficult to change a basic part of one’s personality just because one has a new 7lb boss. Here are some tips to help ease the mental madness:

- Buy, beg or borrow a good, well-padded carrier. Slings, wraps, and snugglies are great for the newborn, and a high quality backpack with adequate head supports for older babies can be a lifesaver for Moms. The back carriers can be great for cooking and kitchen work. If money is tight,

buy a good quality second hand carrier, rather than a cheap new one. The high quality ones have padding in the right places and are designed to support Mom's neck and back muscles much better. Most allow Mom two free hands to get things done.

- Trade one or two mornings a week with another new mom to watch both babies at one house. That way, you are available for nursing, but can pay bills, do laundry or organize things hands free, all the while knowing her baby is well cared for.
- Give up a nap when baby is napping. Don't do this too often. You need to sleep when baby sleeps, but once in a while, it helps to uplift the spirit, just to have a sense of accomplishment for a completed job.
- Send Dad out for a walk to the park, zoo, or class with baby. They can develop some great bonding time and you can get things accomplished.
- Hire a mother's helper to come over and play with baby while you work close by in another room. A mothers' helper is a pre-teen or teenager willing to accept less than babysitting wages for gaining child care experience while having the security of the parent close by for advise and help.
- Consider hiring house cleaners, dry cleaners and professionals to help ease the workload.

Most babies become easier to entertain when they develop their hand to mouth coordination. Sometime around 4 to 6 months, they are happy to hold and taste a variety of toys that will keep them amused. Also, many babies settle into a predictable schedule of their own at this age, where you can count on nap times and playtimes to schedule your tasks.

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