

Ways to Help Families with New Arrivals

The birth of a baby is a wonderful event—and one of the most tiring events in the life of any parent. Even when parents are mature and well prepared, the arrival of a bundle of joy brings with it an incredible series of adjustments. No matter how well prepared a couple might think they are, nothing can prepare them for the amount of time and energy this new person brings. Parents are physically tired and sleep deprived and they wrestle with new roles and responsibilities.

Most of the time, neighbors and friends share the joy of the new arrival with a family. Friends and families host showers, send cards, and offer well wishes. These things are greatly appreciated by the recipient---what family expecting a baby doesn't need clothes and supplies? There are other things that the family needs as well and you may want to consider “gifting” a family with some of the following:

Food: Parents are physically exhausted from the birth of a child and are usually sleep deprived--now is not the time for the parents to be skimping on nutrition. Extra help is needed especially if the family has other children. In addition, women who are breast-feeding benefit from several small meals eaten throughout the day.

You can help out by fixing meals and snacks. Remember that families can benefit from this as much during the fourth or fifth week after the birth as they during the first, so you can fit your gift-giving in with your schedule. Make sure your meals are nutritious and that they require little preparation from the parents to get them from refrigerator to table. Some good foods to fix might include: salads (e.g. tossed, tuna, chicken, pasta), cheese and crackers, 100% fruit juices, soups, casseroles, sliced fruit and vegetables.

Household help: Laundry and housecleaning often increase when the baby comes home. Spend an afternoon cleaning house and doing laundry for the family (or hire a cleaning service for an afternoon).

Baby-sitting: Parents and baby can benefit from a couple of hours away from one another. Offer your baby-sitting services to the new parents. This can allow them to nap,

spend time with other children in the family or with each other or run some errands. The break away is often as good as sleep for the new parent.

New families---and even established families with new arrivals---need the continued support of friends and families after the baby comes home. This is especially important when parents are single or young. Your support helps families feel less isolated and certainly feel loved and supported— isn't that what community is all about?