

Issue No. 2 2010

THE YOUNG PARENT SURVIVAL GUIDE

Great information for young mums and dads

www.treoir.ie

LIFE WITH BABY 10 SURVIVAL TIPS FOR MUMS



10 TOP TIPS FOR BRAND NEW DADS



MONEY MATTERS FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY



Laura's Story

I wanted to die! I was 17 when I found out that I was pregnant. Shock is an understatement. I was on the pill and like most people my age you never think it will happen to you. I was in 6th year and with my boyfriend for only 5 months.

When my period was late I was not worried at first. I took 3 negative tests. In October 2007 my worst fears were revealed. I was 5 weeks pregnant.

I was petrified! I could not stop shaking. My world had just stopped! I never thought this would happen to me.

The next biggest hurdle was telling our parents. This was by far the most terrifying. Every time I would go to tell my mum something would come up. But once we told our parents the weight was lifted. They were upset but so supportive.

I thought my friends would be supportive and it would be my family that would be judgmental. But I found the opposite. You really find out who your friends are. People don't care what you are going through just about spreading the gossip. I lost a lot of school 'friends'. People you used to think had your best interests at heart. It just made going to school even harder. Everyone was talking about the 'pregnant girl'.

I had my daughter 2 weeks after my Leaving Cert. I got my first choice on my CAO application. I am now in 2nd year in college doing Business Studies. Its not easy going to college and coming home to another full day's work, but it will be worth it in the end.

Amy (now 18 months) is the best thing in the world. Being a mom is the hardest thing I have ever done. You really cannot imagine it till you go through it. It is by far the most rewarding too. Amy is the reason I get up for college. Amy is my motivation. She brings our house to light. Everything happens for a reason. None of which would of been possible without my Mum, Dad, Sister and my boyfriend, who have all been a great support.



Welcome!

This is the second edition of this magazine. The first edition was hugely successful. Young parents found it full of useful information – one young mother said there was loads in it she didn't know. This is exactly what we are trying to do – to get good information out there to young parents.

Young parents need information specially for them as well as information that is useful for all parents. For example, every parent wants to know how to stop a baby crying or when to call the doctor. But young mothers,

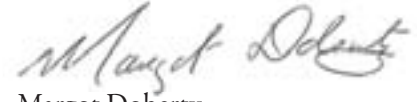
for example, might also need to know about going back to school or training. Young fathers will also find tips here that will help them be more confident with their new babies.

Parents can dip in and out of the magazine. And keep it for later – it will be useful as your baby gets older.

Thanks to Joanne Murphy, Nicola Rodgers, Teresa McElhinney, Patricia Hurley and especially Margaret Morris who all contributed articles to the magazine. A special word of thanks to

David Coleman for his article. Many thanks to the young mothers on the Real Deal Programme who gave us valuable comments at an early stage. A big thank you to the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme for funding this Young Parent Survival Guide.

We hope you enjoy it.


Margot Doherty
Editor



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ARE YOU & PREGNANT & PANICKING?

So, it's really true. You've just found out. There's no doubt. You're pregnant. You'll always remember this moment. The rush of a thousand feelings. And the big question – What now?

Finding out that you're pregnant is a huge deal no matter who you are or what age you are. So many questions come rushing into your head. Who do I tell? What do I do? Who can give me advice?

Your family and friends can be great, so let them know what's going on. But if you're worried or panicking about talking to them about your pregnancy, you have other choices. It can help to talk to someone who is not personally involved, and who can help you to find the answers to your questions. That's where the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme can help. It funds crisis pregnancy services around the country and promotes them through the 'Positive Options' information campaign. Counsellors in these services can help you sort out your feelings about being pregnant and to look at all your future choices. Counselling is free, trustworthy and they won't judge you.

Your GP/doctor or maternity hospital can help with pregnancy counselling too.

If it's possible, talk to the baby's dad. Remember, it's his baby too. Even though you might both be very upset at first, after the initial shock it may be possible to talk things through to arrive at the best decision for everybody. Your baby's father can also use the pregnancy counselling services mentioned previously.

Certain organisations can however attempt to influence your decision. It's important that you book a counselling session with a trustworthy service. The Crisis Pregnancy Programme strongly recommends that women seeking counselling should always visit a recognised and reputable crisis pregnancy counselling service, such as those listed on www.positiveoptions.ie, GPs and other trustworthy services.

For more information visit www.positiveoptions.ie or freetext LIST to 50444 for a list of free, non-judgemental, trustworthy counselling services.

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Sarah's Story

I found out that I was pregnant in the middle of my 5th year of Secondary School. At first I was reluctant to tell my parents, friends and teachers but through talking with both my partner and a youth worker I was persuaded to share it. At the end of my 5th year summer holidays, before I went back to school, a teacher that I trusted told my mother the news. At first she was upset and her initial reaction was to be angry with me. After a while she calmed down and then it began to become a reality.

I left school at the end of November in 6th year to have my baby and with a lot of support I did not fall too much behind on my school work. I had teachers coming out to me each week teaching me the rest of the course that I had missed.

At the beginning it was difficult to balance a new born baby and studying for the Leaving Cert but eventually with the support of different people and organisations it became a routine.

When the baby was old enough, I put him in the crèche for two days a week which then helped me to start back at school gradually. In June 2008 I successfully completed my Leaving Certificate getting the points that I needed to get on the course I wanted. I am now studying that course and in my second year of it.



SHARING YOUR NEWS

Now, how are you going to tell people?

Have you told anyone yet? Remember, while you might be slow to tell, you can get a lot of support from those around you. The dad might find it difficult to accept that you're pregnant, or he might be thrilled. You won't know until you tell him. He could surprise you! Whatever the reaction, at least you'll know where you stand. Your Mam and Dad will nearly always come around after the initial shock. Just give them a chance. They care about you and that you're ok. Tell a friend or

two because sooner or later it's going to become obvious. And it's better if you decide when to tell people rather than people finding out through gossip. Mostly friends will just want to support you. It might be hard to get the words out, but generally the sooner you tell, the better.

Once they know, people can give you the ongoing support you really need. Give them time and a chance to help and support you.

Looking after your pregnant self

Looking after yourself during pregnancy will not only be good for you, it will help to give your baby a healthy start.

Exercise during pregnancy

- Any amount is better than nothing
- Try to keep active every day
- Don't exhaust yourself
- Only engage in low risk activities like walking

Exercise can ease any back pain and other uncomfortable parts of pregnancy you have and can also help you cope better with the physical demands of pregnancy, labour and motherhood. Remember to drink lots of water or other drinks and eat healthily.

Eating well

A healthy diet is important through your entire life but it is even more crucial during pregnancy. Everything you eat and drink can make a difference in how you feel and cope during and after pregnancy and can help your baby to grow and develop.

Here are 8 top tips to make sure you get the nutrition you need:

- Eat enough
- But not too much
- Have milk, cheese or yogurt with every meal – good for building new bones
- Take a vitamin tablet that is made for pregnancy every day
- Have meat, chicken, fish, eggs, cheese or beans every day
- Aim for at least 5 servings of veg and fruit daily
- Have wholegrain cereals and brown breads instead of white
- Aim for about 8 glasses of fluids daily, especially water.

Pregnancy is not the time to diet or try to lose weight.

Remember it took 9 months to build up your pregnancy weight. Don't expect it to disappear immediately once the baby is born!

Stretch marks

Use loads of moisturiser on your bump – it just **might** help to reduce stretch marks but it will not necessarily stop them.

Cigarettes

Try to stop smoking or at least reduce the amount you smoke. A helpful website is www.stopsmoking.ie or you can call the HSE Helpline on 1850 201 058.

Alcohol/other drugs

It is best to avoid alcohol and other drugs completely during pregnancy.





Breastfeeding

The decision to breastfeed is a very important one that can mean better health for you and your baby both now and in the future.

While breastfeeding is the natural way to feed your baby, it takes time to get the hang of it and you may need to stick at it to get it right in the first few weeks.

Midwives and public health nurses are there to help you every step of the way. Breastfeeding goes more smoothly if you have the right information, help and support. Common problems can be avoided simply by knowing what to expect.

You might find it helpful to attend antenatal classes and a breastfeeding support group during your pregnancy.

Why is breastfeeding good for you and your baby?

1. Breastfeeding makes bonding easier and gives you special moments with your baby.
2. Breast milk helps protect babies from germs and illness.
3. Breastfeeding mothers are healthier too.
4. Breast feeding uses up the fat your body stored during pregnancy. So it will help you get back into your pre-pregnancy shape quicker.
5. Breast milk is free! Formula can be expensive.

Contact:

La Leche League - www.lalecheleagueireland.com and Cuidiú – the Irish Childbirth Trust at www.cuidiu.com who have volunteers around the country to provide help, support and reassurance.

See also the HSE breastfeeding website, www.breastfeeding.ie.

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TOP TIPS FOR BRAND NEW DADS

So, you're a dad! You are about to set off on a wonderful voyage of discovery. It can be exciting. It can be frightening. And it can be fun!



1 You are not born with parenting skills - they're learned on the job, through experience. If you're willing to put in the time and effort you'll be able to have a great relationship with your child. The key is patience, unlimited patience.

2 Having a close relationship with your child helps build your child's confidence and self-esteem.

3 If you take an interest in your child's life this tells your child that you care about her/him and that s/he is important. The more time you spend with your child the more capable you'll feel as a parent.

4 The earlier you and your baby start getting to know one another the closer and better your relationship will be. For instance,

when your baby is very small, bath-time can be very special. Learn how to give your baby a massage.

5 Try not to hand your baby over to the nearest woman when your baby is crying or fretting. Have her tell you what to do instead of doing it for you. Don't be afraid to make a few decisions - and a few mistakes - on your own.

6 Carry your baby around and listen to music together. Talk to her/him. Read to your baby. It doesn't really matter what you read - s/he won't understand you yet anyway. The point is to get her/him used to hearing your voice, which will make her/him feel comfortable and secure with you.

7 You do not have to entertain your child every waking moment. Like adults, young children need down-time.

8 Things are going to go wrong, no matter how hard you try, and you have two choices: get stressed and uptight, or roll with it and laugh.

9 Don't be afraid to ask for help or advice.

10 Remember that unmarried dads do not have automatic guardianship rights to their children. Having your name on the birth cert does not give you guardianship rights. You must take action to get your rights. See page 22.

**www.treoir.ie
www.teenparent.ie
www.dad.ie**



WAYS TO COPE WITH A CRYING BABY



“Babies are productive members of society. They spread optimism and good cheer more effectively than any adult. Help them do their work”

Alan (father of a 6 year old)

All babies cry no matter how ‘good’ a parent you are!

If your baby has been crying for a number of minutes try the following:

- 1. BREATHE.** Your baby is screaming and you are probably all wound up. Stop for a moment and take a deep breath and calm yourself. Crying is how babies communicate so your baby is trying to tell you something.
- 2. ASK YOURSELF.** Is my baby tired/hungry/hot/cold/wet/dirty?
- 3. GO WITH YOUR INSTINCTS.** Call your Public Health Nurse or GP if you believe that something is wrong with your baby.
- 4. GENTLY HUG YOUR BABY.** This close contact may help settle your baby. Talk to your baby in a soothing voice. Try giving your baby a massage, turn down the lights, and put on some soft music. Try something you have used before and something you have never used before.

5. NEVER SLAP OR SHAKE

YOUR BABY. If you feel yourself becoming frustrated and are thinking about it *get help immediately.*

6. WALK AWAY FOR A MOMENT.

Put your baby in a safe place and walk away for a moment. Don’t go far away, perhaps into another room. Wait a few minutes and then return to your baby.

7. KNOW YOUR LIMITS.

Ask someone you trust to take over for a while if you need some help. Someone else who has already gone through this before can be a great source of support and information.

8. SUPPORT YOURSELF.

Remember that you are doing your best for your baby and that it won’t always be like this. Get on-going support if you feel you need it.

9. REMEMBER: BABIES CRY!

But if your baby is crying more than usual and you can’t soothe her it is a good idea to call a doctor or nurse.

WHO'S WHO & WHAT'S

A simple guide to the people and services you'll come into contact with.

Being a parent – or about to become one – means that you may need different services or people at different times for help and support. Figuring out who's who and what exactly they do can be quite confusing. Here's a guide to the maze of medical people and other services you might come across.

General Practitioner (GP)/ Family Doctor.

A GP or doctor is usually your first port of call when you are pregnant. S/he will give you personal and continuing care. If you haven't got a GP of your own already, when you're looking for a new one, make sure you get a GP whose surgery is easy to travel to – you'll have a small baby in tow. Ask someone to recommend a doctor or look in the Golden Pages. You should contact the doctor's surgery to ask to go on her/his patient list.

Antenatal Clinic

This is the clinic in the maternity hospital where you'll go for check-ups during your pregnancy. Your doctor will usually make the first appointment for you, or you can do it yourself by phone or by dropping in as soon as you know you're pregnant.

Antenatal Classes

These are special classes usually run by the maternity hospital to help you prepare for the birth of your baby. They are usually free and can be booked through the hospital or the antenatal clinic. Ask at the hospital if they offer special classes for young parents. You'd usually go near the end of your pregnancy for about 4 to 6 classes and you can go to these without losing any pay if you are working.

Obstetrician - often called Consultant

An obstetrician is the doctor in charge of your care at the maternity hospital during pregnancy and the birth of your baby. Your GP will usually book you into the maternity hospital under the care of a particular obstetrician and her/his team.

Midwife

These are the nurses in the maternity hospital and antenatal clinics. They will care for you during your pregnancy, while your baby is being born and afterwards while you're still in hospital.

Social Welfare Officers

Social Welfare Officers (SWO) are part of the Department of Social Protection and are based at the Social Welfare Local Office. You can apply to them for payments such as Jobseekers Assistance/ Benefit, Maternity Benefit, One-Parent Family Payment and Family Income Supplement. You can also pick up application forms for Maternity Benefit and One-Parent Family Payment at your local post office and send them in directly.

Public Health Nurse

These nurses are based in local health centres and are a fantastic help for new mothers. They can give you lots of advice about feeding and caring for your baby. A public health nurse will visit you when you get home from hospital with your baby. She will do

regular check-ups on your baby to make sure s/he is doing okay. You can also bring your baby to the public health nurse in your local health centre if you need some support or information.

Social Worker

Medical Social Workers are social workers based in maternity hospitals. It can be really useful to check in with them as they can offer important information and advice on money matters, form filling, birth registration etc.

Health Service Executive social workers are part of the health service and they work with families who are having difficulties. They are there to work with you and provide help and support if you need it.



WHAT



Community Welfare Officers

Community Welfare Officers (CWO) are part of the local Health Service Executive (HSE) and are based in Local Health Centres. You can apply to your local CWO for Rent Supplement, Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, Supplementary Welfare Allowance and/or Exceptional Needs Payments (for example for a cot or buggy for the baby). You may need to apply for Supplementary Welfare to keep you going after the baby is born while you wait for your One-Parent Family Payment to come through. Contact your Local Health Centre to find out when the CWO is available.



When should I call the doctor

Sometimes it can be difficult to know when you should call the doctor or nurse if you think your baby is not well. Here are a few hints on when you need to call the doctor or nurse or in more serious situations to contact the emergency services directly.

Fevers. The rule of thumb for babies is if his or her temperature is more than 37.8 degrees Celsius (100.2 Fahrenheit) for a baby up to three months, or more than 38.3 degrees Celsius (101 Fahrenheit) for a three to six month old baby, call the doctor.

Not Hungry. You should call the doctor or nurse if your baby refuses 2 feeds in a row.

Low Urine Output. Contact your doctor if your baby has less than 4 wet nappies in 24 hours.

Change in behaviour. If your baby is dull, unusually drowsy or less responsive to people or sounds contact the emergency services immediately.

Breathing. If you notice your baby is having difficulty breathing - particularly repeated or unusually rapid heavy breathing - get medical help immediately.

Digestive stuff. If your baby has three or more episodes of vomiting or diarrhea, or if there is blood in baby's vomit or poo, it is time to make a call. If your baby has eaten any medication, household product or foreign object, make the call.

Crying. Babies do cry a lot. But if your little one is crying continuously and uncontrollably for two or more hours, there is something definitely wrong. If you can't soothe him or her call a doctor or nurse.

Accidents. If the baby has suffered a burn, sprain, large bruise or other injury call the doctor immediately.

Remember, when in doubt, make the call. Even if it's just your gut telling you something is wrong, it is better to be safe than sorry.

LIFE WITH BABY 10 SURVIVAL TIPS FOR MUMS

Having a baby is a life-changing experience. Give yourself time to adjust to this change. Being a new mum can be exciting, exhausting, scary, and everything else in between. Our survival guide to Life with Baby might help you handle the early months of being a mum.

1 Don't try to be Supermum It takes time to learn how to look after your baby. You might make mistakes to start with, you may not be able to always get your baby to settle or stop crying. You might know other mothers whose babies sleep through the night, never seem to cry and the mother has got back into her jeans within a month or two! Every baby is different and so is every mother. Take time to get to know your baby and to get into a routine. And don't knock yourself out trying to be Supermum.

2 Be prepared Babies don't wait for anything! It'll save your nerves and your baby's if you try to get into the habit of preparing in advance. If you're bottle feeding, having the bottles sterilised and ready to use is important. Make sure you always have enough formula milk and nappies etc. in the house. Keep your baby bag full of the stuff you'll need when you go out. Think about what your baby needs and plan ahead. It really does help.

3 Taking care of you Looking after your baby is a full time job in the early weeks and months, but you need to look after yourself as well. You might not be getting very much sleep at night so try to take a nap during the day when your baby sleeps. Try to eat regularly. Keep food in the house for sandwiches, and quick meals like eggs or beans on toast or salads as it may be difficult to get time to cook, especially if you live on your own. It's important to look after yourself as well as your baby.

4 Say yes! If your family or friends offer to help, say yes. If they offer to look after the baby for an hour or two so you can sleep or have a break, take them up on it. In the beginning you mightn't want anyone else to do things for your baby, but do try to let them, as long as you know and trust them. A short break from your baby can help you relax and have more energy and patience to look after the baby when you come back.

5 See people when you want You might find people want to call to see the baby after s/he is born. This can be lovely but it can also be very tiring for you and the baby. Don't cut yourself off from other people but arrange for them to visit or to visit them when it suits you and the baby.





6 Get out and about It's too easy to stay in the house when you've a baby or small child, as it might seem like such a hassle to get organised to go out. It can be good to get out and about even for a walk to the shops. Just a change of scenery can cheer you up. Wrap your baby up well if it's cold outside and make sure to bring a rain-cover for the buggy. Fresh air is good for you and your baby and the exercise can help you stay in shape.

7 Play with your baby You might think there's no point in talking much to your baby or playing with her/him in the early days, but it really is worthwhile. Your baby will react to your voice and your face. Don't forget, from very early on, your baby may try to copy your smiles and frowns, and will respond to toys and sounds - like you singing a nursery rhyme. Your baby doesn't care if you sing like a blocked drain or if you're listing out your shopping, s/he will still be entertained!

8 Talk about it Sometimes after having a baby or even later when your baby is older you may feel down in the dumps, stressed or find it hard to cope. Don't keep this all to yourself. Do talk to someone, maybe your partner, mum or friend. If this doesn't help, have a chat with your doctor or the Public Health Nurse. It's ok to say that you are finding things tough. It's normal. Talking can help. Sometimes it helps to meet and talk to other young mothers, as friends without babies may not be all that interested.

Ask your public health nurse or your local Citizen's Information Centre if there is a group of young mothers or a youth café near you.

9 Make time for you There's less free time when you are a mum but it's important to try to make some time for yourself. If you are in a relationship, try to get out together sometimes, text or talk on the phone often if you don't live together. Small treats like sitting down with a magazine, painting your toenails or watching your favourite TV programme can recharge your batteries. As your baby gets into some sort of a routine (and it may take a while), try to pick out a half hour that's just for you.

10 Don't Give Up on Your Dreams. If you didn't plan to have a baby at a young age it might seem that your life is not working out the way you wanted. Having your baby doesn't mean that you still can't do what you hoped. You might have to slow your plans down or change the way you were going to do things but it doesn't mean that you have to give them up. You can still do things in your life and be a good mum. Check out if there is a Teen Parents Support Programme (see page 28) in your area, talk to your School Guidance Counsellor or go to your local family centre, library or FÁS office in your area to see what's on offer.



SWEET DREAMS

Any conversation with any new parent will always involve the topic of sleep (or lack of it). It takes a while for babies to get into a routine but with a bit of patience and perseverance you will manage.

Here are some helpful hints on getting your baby to sleep better:

- 1** Develop a bedtime routine as soon as possible so that your baby begins to learn the difference between daytime and night-time. An example might be: a bath, fresh nappy and sleep clothes, feed/supper, story and cuddle-time, bed.
- 2** Try to quieten things down before bed-time, perhaps turn off the TV or any loud music. This may help your baby begin to relax. Older children can be encouraged to do something quiet that does not involve rushing around.
- 3** Your baby will link certain things with going to sleep. If you always place your child in his/her cot to go to sleep, this is how they will learn to sleep there comfortably.
- 4** If you usually rock your baby to sleep, push them in the buggy, or take them in to your bed to get them to sleep, they may always need these things to be done before they will sleep. So choose carefully!
- 5** If your baby wakes often in the night, try to soothe her without taking her out of her cot. If she is very upset and you think she needs a cuddle, do this quietly and place her back in the cot as soon as she has settled.
- 6** As children reach toddler stage they still need 11-12 hours sleep at night, so bed-times should allow them to get this amount.
- 7** Try to get some sleep or relaxing time when the baby sleeps. Your priority is to care for your baby, so do not hesitate to ask your partner, family and friends to give you a hand with everything else (especially in the early stages).
- 8** Stay calm. If you feel stressed or if you are finding it hard to cope, talk to someone you trust who has done it before or your public health nurse, GP or support worker.

*I was so looking forward
to having this baby,
and now I feel utterly
miserable. What's the
matter with me?'*

baby blues

After having a baby, your hormones can be all over the place and this can mean that you feel happy one minute and the next minute you are in tears. You may feel a little anxious or depressed, have a hard time concentrating, lose your appetite or find that you can't sleep well even when the baby is asleep. This happens to nearly half of all new mothers so you are not alone if it is happening to you.

If you are a new mother and have any of these symptoms, you may have what's called "baby blues". The baby blues are considered a normal part of early motherhood and usually go away within 10 days after delivery.

What can I do?

- Don't be afraid to tell people how you are feeling – your partner, your family and friends, your GP, public health nurse.
- Get as much rest as you can - ask for help with the baby, household chores and shopping.
- Find time to do a little something for yourself. Try reading, exercising (walking is great for your health and is easy to do), taking a bath.
- Don't expect to be a supermum – there is no such thing!



Post natal depression

Some women have more severe symptoms or symptoms that last longer than a few days. This is post-natal depression.

Post-natal depression is an illness, like diabetes or heart disease. About 1 in 10 women get it. It can be treated with therapy, support networks and medicines such as antidepressants. The symptoms include:

- Feeling sad or down often
- Frequent crying or tearfulness
- Feeling restless, irritable or anxious
- Loss of interest or pleasure in life
- Loss of appetite
- Less energy and motivation to do things
- Difficulty sleeping, including trouble falling asleep, trouble staying asleep or sleeping more than usual
- Feeling worthless, hopeless or guilty
- Feeling like life isn't worth living
- Showing little interest in your baby

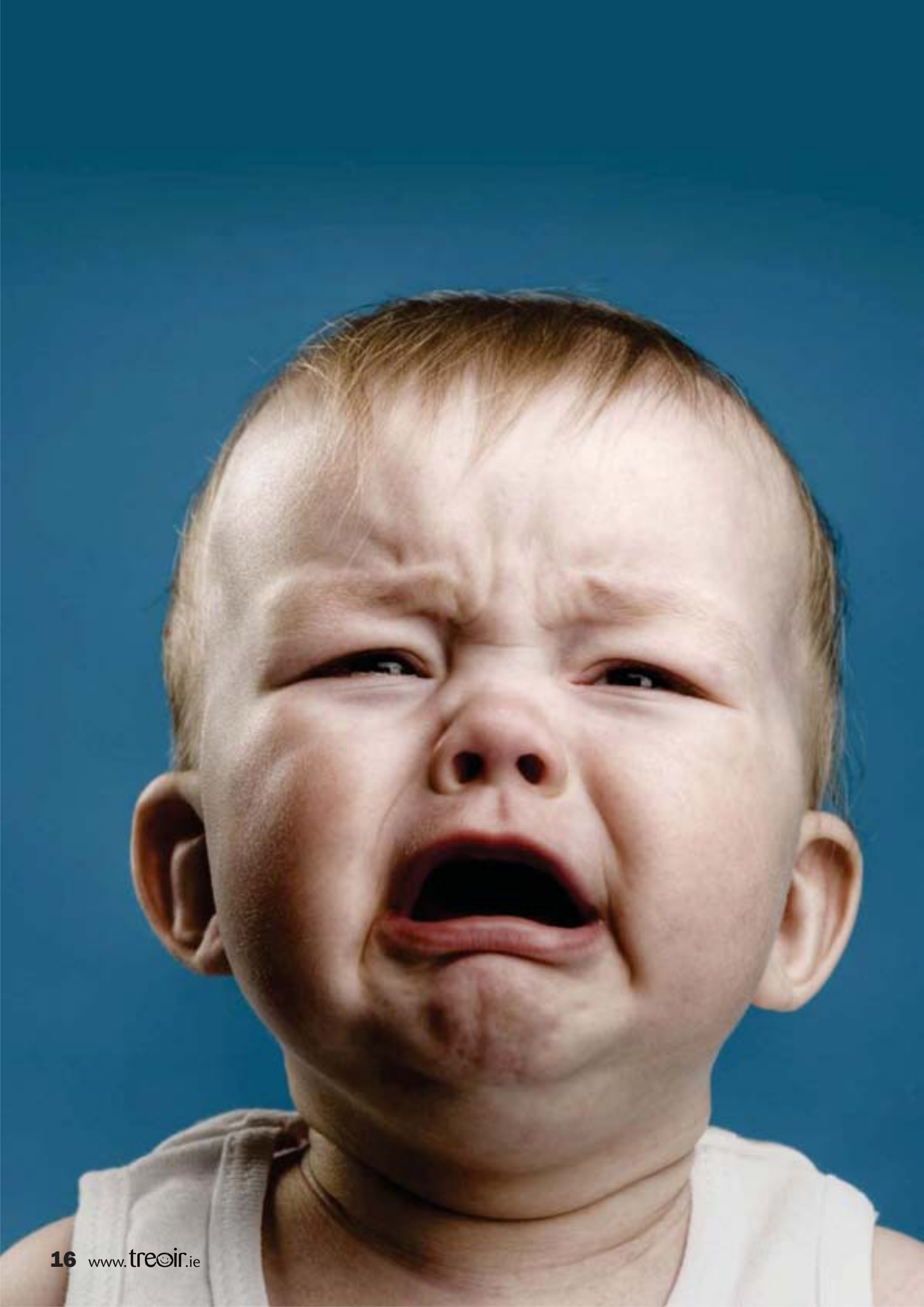
Talk with your doctor about how you feel. S/he may offer counselling and/or medicines that can help.

Useful Contacts:

Post Natal Depression Ireland You can chat to other mothers and professionals on this website - www.pnd.ie

Parentline - information and a listening ear to anyone in a parenting role. www.parentline.ie or telephone Parentline on 01-8733500 to get advice and support

Aware - Help with depression
www.aware.ie or LoCall 1890-303-302 for help if you are experiencing depression



Tips for tantrums



by **David Coleman**

Disciplining small children sounds dramatic. The word discipline can sometimes have negative connotations as we associate it with punishment or a harsh regime.

In fact, discipline for toddlers and preschoolers really means giving them boundaries, structures and limits to guide them and to keep them safe. There are very few small children who are wilfully bold but there are many small children who do things that we don't like.

Most small children are exploring their world and in the process they often make mistakes, they often create mess and their exploration can be in opposition to what we are trying to achieve.

This is not a reason to punish them. It is a reason to offer them some discipline to guide them so that they make fewer mistakes in the future, create less mess and can learn to work with you rather than against you.

Generally speaking most preschoolers' negative behaviour, such as a tantrum, is motivated by one or more of the following feelings:

- **Frustration** (that they can't do something or are being stopped from doing something)
- **Attention Seeking** (they may have realised that certain actions such as screaming

- always get a response from you)
- **Jealousy and Sibling Rivalry**
- **Tiredness and Illness**
- **Emotional Upset** (anxiety, changes to routine, moving house and such like).

When we can be alert to the likely cause of their upset or their challenging behaviour we will usually be more understanding and patient in dealing with them.

Try to share your understanding with your child; even very young toddlers can understand most of what you say. Empathise with them. This means letting them know that you see things from their perspective. For example, you may say something like "yes... you seem very frustrated that your sister is playing with that toy and you can't have it".

You will find that when you show you understand it takes a lot of the intensity out of their tantrum, and their difficult behaviour will reduce.

In addition, particularly with small children, you may find that you can successfully distract or redirect them to another task and their upset gets forgotten and the misbehaviour stops.

Getting cross in response to our toddlers is more likely to lead to an escalating negative spiral of interaction, so try to maintain your calm. If distraction and

empathy haven't helped to stop the misbehaviour then you can try to ignore the behaviour until it stops. As soon as the misbehaviour does stop then you must give lots of positive attention to your child for being calm.

If ignoring doesn't work, or can't be used because, for example, they are hitting someone, then you need to physically intervene to move them away from the scene of the misbehaviour. During the move give very short verbal messages to your child about the misbehaviour. For example you might say: "You may not hit your sister. When you can play without hitting then you can play the game with her".

With small children there is no need for additional punishment, like making them sit in time-out. Once you have stopped the behaviour then your job is done. It is important to try to forgive and forget and move on with the rest of the day.

Remember that your child is just trying to make sense of their world by trial and error. If you praise their successful exploration and redirect, ignore or prevent their unsuccessful exploration you will be providing them with all of the guidance, and discipline, that they need ●

This article was first published on www.glenisk.com and is reproduced with the kind permission of David Coleman. Thanks David.



home sweet home

If you are pregnant, or are already a parent, and living at home with your parents, at some stage you might think about finding your own place to live.

Take some time to think about the following;

- Have you ever lived on your own before - what might be difficult?
- Have you some support close by should you need it - there is a lot involved in caring for a baby or young child, as well as yourself.
- Do you want someone else to share with you?
- Will you get help with your rent / deposit? Check with the Community Welfare Officer in the local health centre in the area where you would like to live.

- If you are under the age of 18 yrs you may not get help to pay your rent (Rent Supplement).
- How much rent can you afford?

Choosing where to live

Try to find somewhere you would feel safe, that's near your family and friends, that has shops and services nearby and that's on a bus route to places you need to go.

Finding a place

Check your local newspaper or notice boards in local supermarkets, www.daft.ie and www.let.ie or local auctioneers/estate agents.

Viewing the House

Always view a house or flat before you agree to take it. It is not wise to go to an empty house on your own to meet someone you don't know, so bring someone with you.

Some things to look out for when viewing a house...

- Is the house clean and warm?
- Are there any visible signs of dampness on the walls or ceilings?
- Are the cooker, fridge, shower etc in working order?
- Is there an electric shower or a means of heating water for bathing/washing?
- Is there a washing machine and means of drying clothes?
- Is there sufficient furniture for you? Is it in good repair?
- Is there enough storage for all you need and somewhere to put your buggy/pram?

Deposits and Leases

Read the lease carefully and make sure you understand and are happy with it before you sign it. Don't sign a lease for

Happy Meals

Here are some tips to help make meal-times happy times -



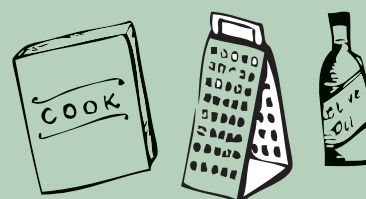
- Plan your meals ahead.
- Babies and toddlers thrive on routine. Try to stick to a regular mealtime schedule.
- Try to keep distractions and stress levels to a minimum.
- Make sure your baby is not too tired or over stimulated.
- It takes a while for your baby to get used to feeding herself. It may be messy so be prepared.



- Make mealtimes a social occasion. If your baby is in a high chair, pull it up to the table and sit down and eat with her. She will learn from observing you and the rest of the family.
- She will also need 2/3 healthy snacks in between meals to ensure she gets an adequate intake of food.
- Babies get thirsty too so give her plenty of drinks – milk, juice, water.



- Praise and encourage her efforts at feeding.
- Set a limit to meal times such as 30 minutes. If she refuses to eat, stay calm. Remove the food and do not force feed your child.
- Offer your child a variety of foods. If she does not like a food at first, try again at a later stage.



- Just because you might not be hungry doesn't mean your baby isn't.

AND DON'T FORGET
YOU NEED TO EAT TOO.



a long period if you are only planning to stay a shorter time. You could lose your deposit. Your landlord does not have to give you a lease but s/he is by law required to provide a rent book showing a record of rent paid, which you keep.

Enjoy your independent life!

Living independently can be challenging and you may need to be more organized than you thought, in order to stay on top of bills and make your budget stretch. This is also a chance for you and your baby to settle down and enjoy each other.



Shared Parenting



It can happen that after two people have a child that their relationship ends. Too often they assume that one of them, usually the father, will not be involved in the child's life. Children like having both parents in their lives – no matter how little the contact is. Where two people have fallen out it can be really hard for them to be in the same room never mind talk to each other to work out arrangements for sharing the parenting. Get help if this is the case (see below) - it's worth making the effort for your child.

“Shared parenting” is where both parents have an active role in the lives of their children. It does not necessarily mean an equal 50/50 division of time. It is up to both of you to work out what suits your individual situation best.

What are the benefits of shared parenting?

1. Shared parenting means that both mothers and fathers can have a strong and positive role in their children's lives
2. Children get a lot out of the on-going affection and interest of both their parents

3. Shared parenting offers the children the possibility of having really good relationships with both their parents
4. Shared parenting means that children can feel loved by both parents and can feel free to love both of you as parents.

Do's and don'ts for shared parenting:

1. Make a “parenting plan” to sort out the time spent with each parent, arrangements for school holidays, pocket money etc.
2. Children need to feel at home in both homes. Have their own toothbrush, quilt, toys and books in both homes
3. Children need information on the arrangements. If you change the arrangements explain them well in advance
4. Be on time for the children when you are collecting or dropping them off

5. Don't use the children's handover time to sort out problems with the other parent
6. Don't encourage gossip and tale-telling from the children about the other parent
7. Don't say bad things about the other parent in front of the children
8. If you are starting a new relationship don't bring along a new partner too soon.

In order to make shared parenting work well you need:

- To put your child's best interests before your own
- Co-operation
- Patience
- Good communication
- To put aside any anger or bitterness you may have towards the other parent
- Goodwill and determination to make it work.



If it is difficult to work things out you could try one of the following:

Mediation

This is where parents meet with a mediator who can help both parents to talk to each other and to work out the best possible arrangements for their child.

Family Mediation Service:

01 – 6344 320, www.fsa.ie

Mediators Institute of Ireland:

01 2847 121, www.themii.ie

Collaborative law

This is where parents work with specially trained lawyers who give them legal advice and guidance. The parents, together with the lawyers, discuss and resolve issues through face-to-face meetings.

Association of Collaborative

Practitioners: **www.acp.ie**

Going to Court

You might need to go to court to sort some things out. Check if you qualify for legal aid by contacting the

Legal Aid Board: **LoCall 1890 615 200, www.legalaid.ie**.

You could also contact FLAC, which offers free legal information & advice services.

LoCall 1890 350 250, www.flac.ie

Get a copy of *Family Links* which has positive pointers for shared parenting from Treoir –

LoCall 1890 252 084. It's free.



John's Story

I met Sarah at school and we started going out. When we started to have sex we always used a condom but then we got careless. I was a bit of a troublemaker at school, I was always giving cheek to the teachers and going missing. At home I was never there, always with my mates.

Me and my girlfriend found out that she was pregnant when I was 19. Sarah was 17 at the time. She was still in school doing her Leaving Cert. and I was on the dole. We had no home, no job but we decided to have the baby. I knew I wasn't ready but neither of us wanted to have an abortion. We were on our own. I was looking for a job but I hadn't my Leaving Cert. or any college qualifications, but the baby kept me going.

Things changed once Caitlin came along. I would arrive at Sarah's house at 10a.m. most mornings. Sarah would have been up from about half seven. I am there most of the day but Sarah's parents don't like me calling.

I really want to be there for both of them, Sarah wants to go back to school to sit her Leaving Cert. and I will probably look after Caitlin during the day if I don't get a job. Having Caitlin has changed my life. I am not in as much trouble as I used to but I wish I had been good at school and got a good job. I want to get my Safepass with FÁS and work on building sites so I am trying to get a place in FÁS.

Legal Bits

Legal jargon for Mothers

Guardianship

You are the guardian of your child by virtue of having had her. This means that you have the right to make decisions about your baby – where your baby lives, what religion she has, what school she'll attend, giving consent to her medical treatment, applying for a passport etc.

A father is not a guardian unless he takes some action. See *How can I become a guardian of my child?* on this page.

Maintenance

It can be difficult to arrive at a figure for maintenance for your child that both you and the dad are happy with. Treoir has a Maintenance Expenses Sheet on www.treoir.ie which helps at least to see how much a child actually costs. If you can't agree on an amount you could try mediation, collaborative law or, as a last resort, go to court for maintenance. See question 2 on page 23 for these contact details.

Legal jargon for Fathers

Guardianship

If you are a **married** father you are automatically a guardian of your child.

If you are an **unmarried** father you are not automatically a guardian of your child even if your name is on the birth cert and/or you are living with the mother. So you don't have the right to have a say in any part of your child's life.

How can I become a guardian of my child?

If the mother agrees with you becoming a guardian you can both go to a peace commissioner or commissioner for oaths and sign a particular form which gives you guardianship rights. This is called an S.I. No. 5 of 1998 form and can be downloaded from www.treoir.ie. If you do sign this form you need to mind it carefully as there is nowhere to register it in a central register.

If the mother does not agree with you becoming a guardian you can go to the local district court and apply for guardianship rights. This is not as daunting as you might think as no-one is allowed into court except yourself and the mother.

Access

If you are finding it difficult to make arrangements to see your child you could try mediation, collaborative law or, as a last resort, go to court for access. See question 2 on page 23.

Maintenance

As a dad you have a responsibility to maintain your child.



Frequently asked questions

1 I'm worried that if something happens to me there will be no-one to look after my daughter. What should I do?

It is very important that you make a will setting out who you would like to care for your daughter in the event of your death. This is especially important if you are your child's only guardian. If you die without making a will one of your relatives or friends could go to court and ask to be appointed a guardian in your place. But it would be better if you made a will appointing a guardian of your choice. Have a chat with whoever you think would be the best guardian for your child - to make sure that they are okay about it - and then make a will. Most Citizen's Information Centres have Free Legal Advice in their centres on certain nights and you could get advice there about making a will. Check the Golden Pages for your nearest centre.

2 My baby's mother won't let me see my baby. What can I do?

Talk to her one more time and suggest going to a mediator – someone who will sit down with both of you and who will try and get the two of you to reach an agreement on when you can see your baby. See Family Mediation Service www.fsa.ie or the Mediators Institute of Ireland www.themii.ie

Another option is called Collaborative Law. This is where you sit down with 2 solicitors and try and work out something that both of you agree with. See Association of Collaborative Practitioners www.acp.ie

If neither of these work then you have no choice but to go to court and look for an access order. You don't need a solicitor to go to court if you can speak up for yourself fairly well. Go to your nearest local district court (the Family Law Court in Dublin) and speak to the court clerk who will help you with the form filling. See The Courts Services www.courts.ie

3 How much is maintenance for a child?

There is no fixed amount of maintenance – it depends on how much income each parent has. It can be quite difficult to work out what is a fair amount of maintenance. Treoir has a Maintenance Expenses Sheet on www.treoir.ie which parents can use to try and sort out the amount. Or you could try mediation or collaborative law (see above). You can go to court to ask the court to fix the amount of maintenance but try and keep out of court as this can often make things worse between parents. The most that the District Court will award is €150 a week for each child.



4 If I need help with legal issues where can I get help?

Treoir has a National Information Service for parents who are not married to each other and has a lot of information on the legal issues which affect unmarried parents. LoCall 1890 252 084 or visit www.treoir.ie.

Call to your local Citizens Information Centre (check your local Golden Pages for your nearest centre), their national helpline 1890 777 121 or visit their website www.citizensinformation.ie

If you need legal advice, you can contact Free Legal Advice Centres on 01 - 874 5690 or www.flac.ie for your nearest centre.

If you need a solicitor you may qualify for legal aid so contact the Legal Aid Board - LoCall 1890 615 200 or www.legalaidboard.ie for your nearest centre.

Money matters for you & your baby



Budgeting is the art of keeping your spending under control

Budgeting

Budgeting is a way of keeping your spending under control, which is not as simple as it sounds. There is nothing mysterious about a budget. A budget simply shows you the money you are getting in and how you are spending it.

A budget is important because it will show you:

1. How much money is coming in (never enough usually)
2. How much money is going out
3. How much is left over (if any!)

1. Write down the amount of money you get in

For example: your One-Parent Family Payment, Child Benefit, any maintenance you are getting from the father and any wages you have.

2. Write down what you are actually spending

For example: food, toiletries, nappies, clothes, child minding, phone, rent, gas and electricity, TV licence, traveling (bus fares, petrol), cigarettes, alcohol, any loans you have.

3. Have a good hard look at both sets of figures and if you are spending more than you are getting in see where you can make any cutbacks.

www.mabs.ie have a useful Budget Sheet which helps you to keep track of what you are spending. If you would like a free copy of the Budget Sheet, contact their Helpline at 1890 283 438 or download from www.mabs.ie/process/step2_5.html.

If you get into debt you cannot manage contact your local Money Advice and Budgeting Service who offer a free and confidential budgeting service.
www.mabs.ie or call 1890 283 438.



You may be entitled to some of the following if you are rearing your child/children on your own

Child Benefit You don't need to apply for this once the birth of your baby is registered. Contact: Child Benefit Section: **LoCall 1890 400 400.**

One-Parent Family Payment - as long as you are not cohabiting or earning more than €425 per week. Contact: One-Parent Family Section: **LoCall 1890 500 000, press 7.**

Family Income Supplement - if you are working over 19 hours a week and are on low pay. Contact: Family Income Supplement Section **01 704 3000, (043) 45211.**

Supplementary Welfare Allowance

– while you are waiting for your One-Parent Family Payment to come through. Contact: Community Welfare Officer (CWO) at your local Health Centre.

Exceptional Needs Payment – for items that you cannot afford to buy yourself, for example, a cot, buggy etc. Contact: Community Welfare Officer (CWO) at your local Health Centre.

Rent Supplement – if you are paying rent or need to find a place of your own. Contact: Community Welfare Officer (CWO) at your local Health Centre.

Medical Card / GP Visit Card

You are very likely to get the Medical Card if you are getting all or some of One-Parent Family Payment. The GP Visit Card allows you to visit your GP for free. You pay for your medicines. Contact: Your HSE local Office or the HSE National Information Line: **Callsave 1850 241 850.**

Income Tax Relief - you could be entitled to the One Parent Family Tax Credit if you are paying tax and not cohabiting. Contact: Your local tax office. Where a parent doesn't live with a child but has the child overnight, that parent can also claim One Parent Family Tax Credit.

Talk to the other parent about paying a share towards the cost of rearing the child you have had together. Remember, the money is for your child and can be a great help.

Frequently Asked Questions



■ If my boyfriend's name is on the Birth Certificate, am I still entitled to One-Parent Family Payment?

Yes - having the name of the father of the baby on your baby's Birth Certificate will not stop you getting One-Parent Family Payment. The Department of Social Protection will ask that you look for maintenance (child support) from the father of the baby, regardless of whether or not his name is on the baby's Birth Certificate.

■ Will my mother still get Child Benefit for me?

Yes, if you are still in full-time education, your mother will continue to receive Child Benefit until you reach your 18th birthday.

■ There are so many forms, what if I need help filling them out?

If there's a social worker in the hospital you are attending during your pregnancy, s/he may be able to help you with all the forms.

You could also visit your local Citizens Information Centre. As well as having many of the forms you'll need, they may also be able to help you fill them out. Citizens Information Centres also often have information about other supports for young parents in your local area, e.g. young parents' groups, youth services etc.

LoCall 1890 777 12.

Get a copy of Treoir's *Information Pack for parents who are not married to each other.*

It has loads of information on Social Welfare and it's free.

LoCall: 1890 252 084.

STAYING

Staying on in school or college after your baby is born...

What's best for you and your baby?

Having a baby is a time of great change in the life of any mother so don't feel under pressure to do anything you don't think is quite right for you both. Always remember that what you do after your baby is born is your choice. You may want to remain at home full time with your baby. Or you may decide to combine being a parent with school or training. Remember you can always go back to education or training when your baby is older and you feel more ready.

This section looks at ways of staying in school or college if that is what you decide.

Staying in School

Some of you reading this may be pregnant and still in school. You may feel tired or have morning sickness, feel embarrassed by your bump or feel that people are talking about you. Some of your teachers may not be as sensitive as they could be. Although this can be a very difficult time, try to remember that all of this will pass.

By law you must remain in school until you're 16 years of age and you have every right to continue in school after that and to get your Leaving Certificate. You cannot be expelled or asked not to attend school because you are pregnant. Your education is for life, so don't let your pregnancy stop you finishing school if

that is what you want to do.

Where to find support

Both secondary schools and third level colleges have staff whose job it is to support students. Some secondary schools have a Home School Liaison Co-ordinator or a School Completion Co-ordinator. Their job is to support pupils who find school difficult for any reason. Your Class Teacher and the Career Guidance teacher may also be able to help. So try to find a teacher that you are comfortable with and talk about what you are finding difficult.

Third level colleges have Welfare Officers and Access Officers whose role is to support students who are having difficulties in getting to college or staying in college.

See page 31 to check if you live in any of the areas in which the Teen Parents Support Programme provides a service. If you live in Waterford city contact the Waterford Student Mothers Group on 051 8442200. If you do not live in any of these areas phone Treoir at LoCall: 1890 252 084 and an Information Officer will talk to you about your entitlements and what schemes exist to support you with your education.

POWER



Home Tuition

If you are in secondary school you may miss school for at least some time before and after the birth of your baby. Ask your Principal about the Home Tuition Scheme. This Scheme means that a teacher can come to your home to keep you up to date with your class work. You can get 9 hours tuition a week for at least 10 weeks and it's free. Talk to your school Principal about organising Home Tuition for you.

What about exams?

Even if you are in an exam year and your baby is due around exam time don't give up. The Department of Education is very good at making individual arrangements to make sure you are comfortable during exams. Babies do not always arrive 'on time' and, even if yours does, special arrangements can be made for you to do your exams in the maternity hospital.

Childcare

Many young parents decide to return to school, training or college after they have their babies. If you decide to do this then finding childcare will be one of your biggest challenges. As you probably

know childcare is expensive. If you think you will need a crèche put your baby's name on the waiting list as soon as he or she is born. Community crèches are less expensive than private crèches so check out if there is one in your area. Ask the manager if you can avail of the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme. You may also be eligible for the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme which is available for children aged between 3 yrs 3 months and 4 yrs 6 months on the 1st September 2010. Contact your local Child Care Committee. See www.omc.gov.ie in the childcare section.

Some third level colleges also have crèches that are subsidised and you should contact them as soon as you make your decision to go to college. Ask your college about Student Access Funds and ask if there are any special funds to help you with childcare.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has an Education Grant which is a fund to help people to get into education, and that includes funding for childcare. Contact them through their **National Office on 01 838 6990 or info@svp.ie**.

TWO FAMILIES, ONE HOME

GIVE AND TAKE WHEN LIVING WITH YOUR PARENTS



Most young mothers go back to live at home with their own family after having their babies. This can be great for most young mothers as they can get back on their feet with the help and support of their own parents.

However, there can be times when living at home can be hard:

- You may feel that your parents are interfering in the way you care for your baby. But your parents may

feel that you need advice on child-rearing.

- You may assume that there will be endless, free babysitting and childcare. But your parents may have a life of their own and may not want to give up their time.
- You are caring for your baby every day, very often with broken sleep, while juggling everything else that young people do. But your parents may want you to do more in the house as well.

- You may feel more adult now that you have had a baby and want to do your own thing without too many questions. But your parents want you to obey the normal house rules, if you are still a teenager under their roof. This may become even more of an issue if you are still at school.
- You now have your own income and want to spend it the way you decide. But your parents may want you to give money into the house to help with the household costs and also to learn to save for the future when you may be out on your own.

If you find yourself in the situation where you are constantly fighting with your parents, try to get a good time to talk with them calmly about how you are feeling and how difficult it is to juggle being a mother, a daughter and a young person. Listen to their side of the story – they may be finding it difficult having a child in the house again (having thought they were finished with rearing children) and could be reluctant to get into it all again. They could also be finding it hard not to take over or don't know how to treat you now that you are a mother but still also their child.

Try to be honest when talking to each other and try to think up new ways of sorting out the problems.

When things change it can be very hard – and there are big changes going on in your family.

If things are so bad that you cannot sit down with your parents and have a calm chat about it, it may be worth thinking about bringing in a neutral person to help you work through the main issues. You could contact your local Teen Parents Support Programme, if there is one in your area, or Family Centre to explore what options are available to you in your area.

SEXUAL HEALTH

If you're pregnant right now or have recently had your baby, sex or contraception might be the last thing on your mind. However, once your baby is born it is possible to become pregnant even before your periods start again or even if you are still breastfeeding. There are lots of contraception options available. Talk to your doctor and discuss what method is best for you. Ask lots of questions, and know the facts about each method before you use it.



Three Little Words – Sexually Transmitted Infection

Knowing how to keep you and your partner safe and healthy when it comes to sex should become an important part of any relationship. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) can put a damper on the most romantic relationship so know the facts about preventing them.

So first, what is an STI?

It's an infection that can be passed from one person to another during sexual contact if one person is infected. Some infections you might have heard about are Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Genital Warts, Herpes and HIV.

Why should I worry about STIs?

Some STIs can have long lasting effects if they are left untreated -

- They can lead to infertility
- They can cause damage to your organs
- In the case of genital warts they can increase a woman's chance of getting cervical cancer
- Some can also cause great discomfort and irritation or pain and /or an unpleasant discharge

Most STIs - but not all - can be treated, especially if found early on.

Remember It only takes one sexual contact with a person who has an STI to pass it on. Using Dual Protection (condoms and another method of contraception, such as the pill) will help you to have safer sex, reducing the chances of experiencing an unplanned pregnancy or getting a sexually transmitted infection.

If I don't actually have sexual intercourse am I ok?

No – Some infections can be passed on by other sexual activity such as oral sex or close genital contact.

How would I know if I had an STI?

Some STIs do not always show symptoms, or may not for a long time. This means that you might not know if you have one and also you cannot tell if someone else has one. If you think you might have an STI – itchiness, spots, sores, rash, needing to pee more often, pain when peeing or a change in your normal discharge – go to your doctor or clinic if there is a Sexually Transmitted Infection Clinic in your area. The clinics will normally give you, free, medication that you need to treat an infection if you have one. If you have an infection your partner should be tested too.

Check out www.spunout.ie, www.yoursexualhealth.ie and www.thinkcontraception.ie.

What can I do to reduce the chance of getting an STI?

There are no 100% guarantees apart from not having sexual contact at all! However there are some things you can do to greatly reduce the risk.

- Don't feel you have to have sex with every partner. The more people you have sex with the more chance you have of meeting someone with an STI.
- Always use a condom every time you have sex until you are both sure that you do not have an infection.
- Talk to your partner about STIs and what you can both do to reduce the risk. It might not be very romantic but neither is finding out you have an STI.
- Male and female condoms are the only form of contraception that offer protection against STIs.

Teen Parents Support Programme

Are you pregnant and under 20 years of age? Were you a teenager when you had your baby and is he or she still under 2 years of age? Then the Teen Parents Support Programme may be for you! The TPSP (as it is known) was set up especially to support young parents (both mums and dads) like yourself. The workers in the TPSP will give you one-to-one support to deal with your own individual situation. For example, you may want to talk about how you are feeling and how your pregnancy is affecting those around you – your own parents and the other parent of your baby. Or you may need information about how to care for yourself and your baby, on Social Welfare, housing and childcare. The TPSP may also be able to give you some financial support to remain in school or training and, if you are interested, can link you in with other young parents in your area.

Margaret Morris

National Co-ordinator 01-670 0167

At the moment you can contact TPSPs in the following areas:


Location	Contact No.
Carlow & Kilkenny	059-913 8711
Cork City & County	021-496 6780
Donegal <i>includes Letterkenny, Inishowen and the Finn Valley area</i>	074-9190141
Dublin Ballyfermot, Bluebell, Inchicore Drimnagh, Crumlin, Dublin 24 Parts of Dublin 8 Dublin 13, 7 & 5 Parts of Dublin 9 & 3 Finglas	087 9950439 01-403 2081 01-848 4811 01-864 1989
Galway City & County	091-544 960
Limerick City & County	061-411 643
Louth	041-987 5273
North Wexford <i>includes Gorey, Courtown, Camolin, Coolgreany, Ferns, Kilmuckridge, Bunclody</i>	053-9481014



teenparents
support programme




Clare's Story



I was given a leaflet with information about the Teen Parents Support Programme (TPSP) at the Louth hospital when I was attending the ante-natal clinic. I decided that I could use all the help I could get as I was 17 and not looking forward to the prospect of being a single parent. I had just finished my first year of a degree in accounting and finance and I was convinced that I was going to have to drop out of the course. I left my details at the hospital and a project worker contacted me shortly afterwards. At first I found it a bit daunting, having a stranger calling to my house and having to explain my situation, but I soon realised that she was only there to give me help and support and that I needed that help and support.

She was able to help me to weigh up my options with regards to my future. She restored my confidence and within a few times of meeting her I felt that things were beginning to look up. She had told me that there was help available from the Programme where they could pay my childcare costs if I wanted to continue my education. It was when I returned to college after the summer break that I needed the most help. I was struggling financially and as my pregnancy was progressing she helped me with money for maternity clothes and she also put me in touch with the chaplain in college, who was able to give me some financial support too. When my first semester exams came around I began to get a bit concerned as I was due right in the middle of them. I made arrangements to defer them but I wanted to get them over and done with so I sat a few of them, I even did one the day I was due!



It was after I had the baby I was having a tough time at home and felt that I needed my own space and the project worker gave me great support. She helped me to get my name on the housing list and to get Rent Allowance so that I could get my own house straight away. The Teen Parents Support Programme gave me an opportunity to meet other girls who were in the same situation as myself which I thought was great because it helped me to make new friends and reassured me that I wasn't the only one who was going through the things that I was going through. First they organised baby massage classes for anyone who wanted to learn how to do it and in college they organised a group for young mothers where we met once a week for a number of weeks.

I used to meet my TPSP worker once every few weeks for a chat to let her know how I was getting on and if I was having any problems she always did her best to help me to overcome them by helping me to find information and giving me advice. The Teen Parents Support Programme has a lot to offer young parents, and although I'm no longer a teenager any more I still like to meet with my project worker to have a chat and it's nice to know that I have someone there to call if I have any problems. It's great because every time I've talked things over with her I feel like a huge weight has been lifted from my shoulders. I have just graduated from DKIT with an honours degree in accounting and finance and am now studying for a masters degree in entrepreneurship and marketing.

treoir

is the Irish word for direction or guidance. We chose this word as a title for our organisation as we give clear and up-to-date information free of charge to parents who are not married to each other and those involved with them.

Treoir can give you information on:

Social Welfare entitlements

- a. One-Parent Family Payment
- b. Rent Supplement
- c. Family Income Supplement
- d. Back to Education Allowance etc

Registering the birth of your baby

Legal issues

- a. Access
- b. Custody
- c. Guardianship (fathers' rights)
- d. Maintenance of children
- e. Passport applications
- f. Establishing paternity
- g. Cohabitation

The importance of both parents in the lives of their children

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Treoir has information for parents who are not married to each other – whether you are living together or not.

www.treoir.ie

**National Information Service for Unmarried Parents,
14 Gandon House, Custom House Square, 1FSC, Dublin 1
LoCall 1890 252 084**

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