Caring for a Newborn While Suffering With Fibromyalgia

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Fibromyalgia and Coping With a Baby

Bringing new life into the world is a beautiful, life-changing experience. Holding your baby in your arms for the first time is absolutely breathtaking. This journey of parenthood, however, is just beginning.

Any parent will tell you raising children has a lot of ups and downs. Being a parent who sufferers from a chronic illness, such as fibromyalgia, just adds to the challenges already in front of you.

Sleep

Newborns sleep a lot, but not for long stretches of time. They need to eat frequently throughout the day and night. Fibromyalgia oftentimes causes sleep disturbances, which results in extreme fatigue.

Combine these two things and this can quickly lead to complete exhaustion. Exhaustion can then in turn cause pain and cognitive fatigue.

It is important to get as much rest as possible, whenever possible. This may mean napping during the day while the baby sleeps, although this could be difficult to do if you have older children as well. If at all possible try to schedule a time during the day when everyone naps or simply has quiet time.

It is also important to be careful of your caffeine intake. It may be tempting to drink coffee all day to keep yourself awake and alert. But too much caffeine can make it difficult to sleep when the opportunity does arise.

Pain

Your new baby may seem so tiny at first, but carrying around an extra seven to eight pounds can quickly cause sore muscles for someone suffering from fibromyalgia.

It may be beneficial to have multiple places around the house where you can safely lay your baby down, such as a swing, bouncer, or even a cushioned blanket on the floor. This enables you to have baby close by as you go about your daily activities, without the strain of holding them the entire time.

It is also helpful to use a baby carrier, which distributes the baby's weight to multiple areas of the body, rather than all of it resting on one spot. But even these can cause pain to the back and shoulders if used for long periods of time. Frequent periods of rest are likely to be necessary and give you a great opportunity to sit and cuddle with your bundle of joy.

Next page: breastfeeding, asking for help, and my experience

Breastfeeding

Studies have shown women with fibromyalgia typically do not have a lot of success when it comes to breastfeeding. However, do not give up all hope!

The women involved in the study cited having problems with producing enough milk and having pain caused by sitting in an uncomfortable position while breastfeeding, among other things. If you are experiencing trouble with milk production, some have found help taking certain herbal supplements or teas, or from eating certain foods.

If you find you are in pain after feeding your baby, try sitting in a different positions each time. Use different pillows and footstools until you find a comfortable spot. You may also need to change positions during the feeding to keep from getting too stiff from sitting in one position for a long time.

Another obstacle may arise if breastfeeding prevents you from taking needed medication. Many medicines are not considered safe for breastfeeding mothers, as an unsafe amount could pass to the baby.

It's important to talk to your doctor and find what your options are. There may be an alternative treatment available that would not affect your baby, or that would not be harmful to them.

Of course, if you are not able to continue breastfeeding for as long as you had planned, do not view it as a failure. Know that any amount of time that you have spent breastfeeding is beneficial to them and to you.

Get Help

Allowing others to help out around the house can be a huge load off your shoulders and can give you the needed time to catch up on sleep, or even just to sit and relax.

My Experience

I currently have a toddler and a very young infant at home. I can attest to the fact that caring for a newborn can be hard, tiring work. But it is also one the best, most rewarding things I have ever done.

I am tired a lot of the time, but I am able to function. I have found that years of fibromyalgia exhaustion has ultimately prepared me for parenthood.

I experience pain frequently, but not more than I can handle. I have found several natural remedies to be helpful for myself, such as magnesium, vitamin D and vitamin B12.

I was able to breastfeed my first son for eight months — not as long as I wanted to, but still a good amount of time. I am currently breastfeeding my second son with the help of an herbal supplement to keep my milk production up.

Even though it is not always easy, I have found it is necessary, and beneficial, to get help from my family and friends. I like to think of myself as being capable of doing it all, but modesty requires me to admit I am far from being superwoman.

At the end of the day, those of us that have suffered from fibromyalgia know a thing or two about strength, endurance and fortitude — all of which are very much needed once you become a parent. Yes, fibromyalgia throws a few more bumps and curves in the road, but it is not necessarily a complete roadblock on this wonderful journey of parenthood.