

Parenting From The Womb

Parenting can start long before your baby enters the outside world. Parenting from the womb as it is known, can help parents develop a bond with their little one before delivery. This relationship can be especially important when the baby is diagnosed with a fetal medical condition.

Research shows that babies have the capability to sense affection from their parents before they are born and respond to their mother's emotions. If a mother is calm and relaxed, the baby often is too. This natural relationship between parents and their baby begins before delivery. There are even studies that tell us we have the ability to see, hear, feel and taste before we leave the womb.

Building a relationship with a baby in the womb is different for everyone. Some ways our mothers have parented from the womb include:

- » Talking to your baby and calling them by name if one has been chosen.
- » Reading stories together. If there are siblings, include them in reading stories too.
- » Writing a letter to your baby and ask other family members to do the same, then read them aloud.
- » Creating a pregnancy journal that documents thoughts and feelings.
- » Making memories during your pregnancy by going to special places that you know you would hope to take your baby. Document your memories with pregnancy photos.
- » Doing prenatal yoga.
- » Listening to music and singing songs.
- » Attempting to maintain a calmness within yourself when feeling overwhelmed or sad. Come back to thinking about how much you love your baby.
- » Touching or massaging your belly while relaxing.
- » Responding to your baby's kicks by gently pressing your hand over your belly where the kick is felt, and seeing how your baby reacts.
- » Taking pictures of your growing bump throughout pregnancy.
- » Creating memories with a craft project, experience or event.
- » Giving yourself time to reflect. Go for a walk outside or take a warm bath and think about your baby.
- » Having professional prenatal and postnatal photos taken. Our team can connect you with *On Angels Wings*, an organization that offers free maternity photos as well as photos at the hospital during delivery and/or after birth when a baby has a potential life-limiting diagnosis.
- » If you have spiritual beliefs or religious preferences that guide your life, coordinate prayers or a special sacrament for your baby at the time of delivery.

Connecting with a baby whose future is unknown can be hard, but this connection is so important for moms and their little ones. Fathers, siblings, and other family members can also be involved in developing this bond with the baby.

If you are having a difficult time connecting with your baby, it's okay. Talk with your healthcare team and they can provide you with support to help build the relationship.

A Cardinal Glennon St. Louis Fetal Care Institute nurse is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to discuss referrals with physicians and potential families by calling 314-268-4037, option 2.

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