

A Guiding Light for New Moms: Nurse Family Partnership

"I am so overwhelmed with all information available online nowadays about pregnancy and having a baby, I don't know how to know what is best for me and my pregnancy!" shared Michelle, who was 15 weeks into her first pregnancy. Not only has the first trimester been full of morning sickness, but she has been obsessed with reading all the latest advice regarding healthy pregnancies and newborn care. This led Michelle to reach out to MotherToBaby's confidential and free **text service** asking about prenatal vitamins, but she also wanted to know what other resources were available for first time parents.

As a MotherToBaby specialist, I knew the perfect resource to direct Michelle to: **Nurse-Family Partnership**. Elly Yost, a nurse practitioner with over 35 years of experience explains how this evidence-based, community health program can help first-time moms and their children affected by social and economic inequality.

Moms enrolled in the Nurse-Family Partnership program benefit by getting the care and support they need in order to have a healthy pregnancy. At the same time, families develop a close relationship with the nurse who becomes a trusted resource they can rely on for advice on everything from safely caring for their child to taking steps to provide a stable, secure future for their new family. Find out more about Nurse-Family Partnership [here](#).

Q: What does the relationship look like between an NFP nurse and parent-to-be?

Elly: The relationship between an NFP nurse and a parent-to-be is built on trust and support. We prioritize the client as the expert in their own life, ensuring that their desires and needs guide our approach to supporting a healthy pregnancy. Our role is to meet them where they are and provide the tailored support to navigate this transformative journey effectively.

Q: What health benefits might a person experience from participating in the NFP Program?

Elly: Participating in NFP can yield a range of health benefits for first-time parents. Through regular health assessments conducted by a registered nurse (RN), participants receive personalized health screenings aimed at promoting overall wellness. This holistic approach not only addresses the immediate health needs of the parent but also extends to the well-being of their child. By closely monitoring factors such as blood pressure and weight gain, NFP nurses work with expectant mothers to identify and understand potential danger signs, such as swelling or headaches, that may indicate underlying health concerns.

Recognizing that pregnant women are the experts on their own bodies, NFP empowers them with knowledge and support to recognize and address anything that seems concerning. We learn about each person's health history to

customize care to their needs.

NFP nurses also regularly check on the baby's growth and development after birth by measuring length, weight, and head circumference, along with developmental milestones using Ages and Stages Questionnaires®. We look at what the parent and child need emotionally and socially, understanding how their health is linked and creating a caring environment for them to bond.

Q: Why does the Nurse-Family Partnership model work?

Elly: The NFP model is proven to work because it prioritizes the needs and desires of the parents it serves. By adhering to client-centered principles, we believe in listening to each first-time mom we work with because we know she's the one who knows her life best. We've seen that even small changes can lead to big, positive results, so we focus on finding solutions together.

One big part of what we do is making sure moms feel heard and supported. We talk with them about how they're feeling during pregnancy, understanding that it's normal to have all kinds of emotions during this time. We're here to offer guidance and reassurance, helping them navigate any worries they might have.

Our team of RNs is crucial to our work. With their education and experience, they provide moms with the best information and support possible. They're here to make sure every mom gets the care and guidance she deserves on her journey.

Q: How long does the relationship between the NFP and the family last?

Elly: Something unique about the role of an NFP nurse in the partnership with moms is the duration of the relationship. Families have the freedom to stay connected with their NFP nurse until their child turns two. This extended period allows for a deep and meaningful relationship to develop between the nurse and the parents, fostering trust, support, and continuity of care throughout the critical early stages of the child's development. This extended duration underscores the uniqueness of the bond formed within the NFP partnership, reflecting a commitment to long-term support and empowerment for both the parents and their child.

Q: How does the role of an NFP nurse change after a baby is born?

Elly: After a baby is born, NFP nurses adjust their role to support the special bond between the mother and her newborn. While the basics of care stay the same, the focus now extends to the dyad and family unit. The nurse's attention is directed towards both the individual needs of the mother, developmental milestones, well-being of the newborn, and the family.

Despite this adjustment, the core role of the nurse as a source of guidance, advocacy, and support for the mother persists, ensuring that she continues to receive personalized care and attention throughout her journey into

motherhood.

Q: How do NFP nurses support first time parents' mental health?

Elly: NFP nurses play a crucial role in supporting the mental health of first-time parents through a combination of clinical expertise, compassionate care, and advocacy. From a clinical perspective, nurses conduct thorough assessments for depression and anxiety. Additionally, nurses assess the temperament and emotions of mothers, providing tailored support and referrals based on individual needs and preferences.

What sets NFP nurses apart is their dedication to building trusting relationships and providing personalized care. They invest time in getting to know each client, fostering a supportive environment where parents feel comfortable expressing their concerns and emotions. This level of care and observation allows nurses to offer not only clinical support but also emotional reassurance and guidance.

NFP nurses also act as advocates, guiding parents through the healthcare system and connecting them with resources for mental well-being. By addressing both the clinical and emotional aspects of mental health, NFP nurses empower first-time parents to navigate the challenges of parenthood with strength and confidence.

Q: What would you like to see improved about the current state of pregnancy and/or post-birth care?

Elly: I think one area for improvement in current pregnancy and post-birth care is the practice of listening and truly hearing the experiences and concerns of expectant and new parents. For example, the 'Hear Her' campaign by CDC highlights the importance of this simple yet profound concept: actively listening to pregnant and postpartum people and believing them.

By taking the time to genuinely hear and understand the needs and perspectives of clients, healthcare providers can foster trust, enhance communication, and deliver more patient-centered care. Empowering women to share their stories and validating their experiences can lead to improved outcomes and a more supportive healthcare environment for all.

Q: What is additional guidance you would give a first-time parent?

Elly: Additional guidance I would offer to first-time parents is simple yet powerful: You're doing a great job! Love for your child is the cornerstone of effective parenting. Embrace the idea of 'good enough parenting,' where you do your best without feeling pressured by unrealistic standards. In a world full of advice and expectations, what matters most to your child is your love and care. Trust your instincts, show them love, and believe in your ability to navigate parenthood's journey. If you are a first-time mom who is 28 weeks pregnant or less, you can find a free, personal NFP nurse in your area [here](#).

NFP Is Here For You!

After sharing the resources of NFP with Michelle, she texted back the next day saying “Thank you! I read through their website and this is exactly what I need to make me feel confident in my decisions during the rest of my pregnancy and have someone to help me during the early days of parenthood. I already enrolled in the program and hope to get started soon.” It is so lovely to hear that NFP was exactly what Michelle needed, and I hope that she and other first-time parents continue to benefit from this resource for years to come.

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://www.MotherToBaby.org).

Disclaimer: MotherToBaby Fact Sheets are meant for general information purposes and should not replace the advice of your health care provider. MotherToBaby is a service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS). Copyright by OTIS, May 30, 2024.