

## VISITATION SCHEDULES FOR BABIES

Sometimes divorce occurs when children are babies. Many states either have special schedules for babies or no schedules at all. Those without schedules leave it up to the parents to figure it out.

So if the baby's parents have the task of figuring out a schedule, what do they do? Usually, but not always, one parent will be the primary caretaker of the child. This is usually the mom. Even though the baby has a primary caretaker, it is imperative for the non-primary caretaker of the baby (usually the dad) to establish a relationship and bond with the baby. For ease of reference, I will refer to the primary caretaker as Mom and the non-primary as Dad.

Child psychologists have advised that Dad have lots of short, frequent visits with the baby, but no overnights until the baby is older. This could mean a schedule where Dad will spend time with the baby for a few hours every day or every other day. It's a good idea for both parents seek the advice of a child psychologist or co-parenting coordinator to get ideas as to how best to set up a schedule for the baby.

If this is Mom's first child, she may have what I call "New Mommy Syndrome" whereby she will be glued to the baby and will feel like she cannot let the baby go with Dad because Dad won't properly care for the baby. Mom needs to understand that Dad has every right to spend time with the baby and yes, he won't care for the baby the way she would, but he'll care for the baby the way he feels is best and most likely the baby will be fine. On the other hand, Dad needs to understand that this baby is bonded with Mom and that's healthy for the baby at this age and it helps the baby to become an emotionally stable and secure child. Dad will need to be patient and understand that in a few years he'll be able to spend much, much more time with his child doing all the things he's dreamed of such as baseball, fishing and the like.

Once you have a schedule set for your baby, keep in mind that it's not written in stone because every baby is different. Much of the success of the schedule depends upon the baby. Some babies are very happy go lucky and go back and forth between Mom and Dad's house never missing a beat. Other babies are so bonded to Mom that they can't be away from Mom for even one day. Whatever schedule you set up, watch your baby and see how he or she adapts to it and be open minded to changing the schedule to accommodate your baby's personality. It's a good parent who can put his or her differences with their spouse aside and do what's best for their baby knowing all the while that this is just a temporary arrangement until the baby gets older.