

Finding out that you are going to be a father can be an exciting and confusing time. You may be asking yourself:

- How will having a baby change my life?
- How will I pay for all the things our baby will need?
- How can I be a good dad?
- What can I do to help during pregnancy?

What you need to know

While it's true that she's having the baby and she's the one whose belly is growing, there's lots for Dad to do during this exciting and sometimes confusing time.

What you can do

Be involved. Go with your partner to her preconception and prenatal visits.

- During the prenatal visit at the end of the first trimester (months 1–3 of the pregnancy), you can hear the baby's heartbeat.
- During the second trimester (months 4–6), go with your partner if she needs an ultrasound (a test that uses sound waves to take a picture of the baby). You'll be able to see your baby's head, arms, hands, legs and feet. You may even find out the sex of your baby. Your baby will start to seem very real to you.
- During a third-trimester (months 7–9) prenatal visit, ask the midwife how you can help during labor and delivery.

Watch, listen, browse and read. Watch videotapes, listen to audiotapes, check out the Internet, or read books about pregnancy, childbirth and being a parent.

Help plan for the baby. Talk to your partner about what you both want for the baby. Decide where the baby will sleep, and make that part of your home colorful and welcoming for the baby. Go shopping for baby things. Look together at your finances.

Learn

Go to childbirth education classes with your partner- you will learn how to help your partner during labor and delivery. Read pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, and parenting books, or listen to them on audio.

Help your partner stay healthy during pregnancy. Help her eat healthy foods, exercise, quit smoking, stay away from alcohol and illegal drugs and avoid dangerous workplace and household hazards (such as paint thinner and weed killers). Quit smoking yourself. Secondhand smoke is bad for pregnant women and babies.

Understand the changes that are a normal part of pregnancy. Pregnancy causes many changes in how a woman feels and in her body. You may find that your partner is happy one minute and sad the next. These fast changes in feelings are called mood swings and are common during pregnancy. Your partner also may be tired a lot of the time. That's because it's hard work to carry a new and growing life inside of your body.

Continue to have sex if you and your partner wish to do so. Your partner may want to have more sex or less sex than before she was pregnant. Her desire for sex may change as her body changes. Many people find that sex feels different during pregnancy. As her belly gets bigger, try different positions. Find one that's comfortable for both of you. Talk to each other about what feels good. Remember, as long as your health care provider says it's okay, it's safe to have sex during pregnancy. It won't hurt the baby.

Be supportive

If your partner chooses to breastfeed, support her decision. Breastmilk is the best food for your baby. It has everything that your baby needs to grow and be healthy. Find out about breastfeeding together. Talk to your midwife about breastfeeding.