



# So, you're going to be a dad?

**Congratulations!** Raising happy, healthy babies is a team effort so you and your partner will have to work together and even though you're not a dad yet – there's so much you can do **RIGHT NOW!** Here's a few pointers about how to give your child the **best possible start in life.**



## Working as a team during Pregnancy

- 1 It takes a lot of energy to grow a baby – anything you can do to help means your partner can put extra energy into your baby.
- 2 Physical, practical and emotional support is important.
- 3 Can you help around the house and with meal preparation? Massage? Foot rubs?
- 4 Listen to your partner – how do they feel about having a baby and becoming a mother?
- 5 Talk about the birth, show interest and help them prepare for birth by learning their preferences.
- 6 Help to make informed decisions if requested.
- 7 Talk about what you can do to help.
- 8 Your growing baby loves to hear your voice, read a story, hum or sing to the bump (after 18 to 20 weeks they can hear you).
- 9 Ask other dads about their experience.
- 10 Attend pregnancy and ultrasound appointments and antenatal groups (if possible).
- 11 Share stories about your own parents – What will you repeat? What will you change?
- 12 Learn and practice active labour positions.
- 13 Learn and practice breathing together with a calm rhythm this is great training for the birth.
- 14 Your partner's body and hormones are changing. At times they may not 'seem themselves' – be patient, listen to concerns, understand their perspective and gently reassure them.
- 15 Expressing your love and continuous support is important – reinforce your commitment to your family throughout pregnancy.
- 16 Get lots of rest before baby comes.
- 17 Be prepared: How will you get to the hospital? How long will it take? Where will you park? Does the car have fuel?
- 18 Find a professional to install a baby seat in the car.
- 19 Support your partner's preference when you discuss where the baby will sleep.
- 20 Discuss visits from family and friends in hospital, and when you go home after the birth. Set boundaries and share these with everyone before the big day. How can they support you and your family?
- 21 Pack three bags together. For you, your partner and your baby.

There is no such thing as the perfect dad! You'll have your good days and your bad days. Do your best, and don't worry too much, about the rest. For more information see:

[www.birthingdads.com.au](http://www.birthingdads.com.au)

[www.cope.org.au/readycotope/](http://www.cope.org.au/readycotope/)

[www.sms4dads.com.au](http://www.sms4dads.com.au)



## Working as a team during Birth

- 1 When labour starts it might be quite a while before you have to leave home. Distract your partner with music, a movie or even get some rest if you can.
- 2 Stay safe at home and don't come to the hospital too early. Call the midwives, they will tell you when to come.
- 3 Right from the beginning and all the way through labour keep calm and help your partner keep calm.
- 4 Remember your breathing training help her breath with a calm rhythm.
- 5 Remember your active labour training and help them move into their preferred positions.
- 6 Observe the midwife and mimic her strategies for helping your partner.
- 7 Fetch some ice, water, snacks or a damp sponge.
- 8 Pay attention to your partner at all times and stay focussed.
- 9 Don't get offended if they yell at you or hurt your feelings.
- 10 Turn off mobile phones and don't get distracted.
- 11 Support them physically, emotionally and practically. Talk about what this means/looks like.
- 12 Learn some positive 'affirmations'. Write them down and memorise.
- 13 Your baby will love to hear your soothing voice during labour too.
- 14 Remember birth has happened safely billions of times. Trust it will happen safely this time too.
- 15 Learn your partner's wishes for working with the sensations of labour. Keep this up until they ask for a change.
- 16 If your partner wishes – support their weight, mop their brow, massage the lower back and squeeze their hips during surges.
- 17 Be kind and respectful to hospital staff, they're there to help, and do this every day.
- 18 Remember your partner's birth preferences. It's ok to ask health professionals questions at any time.
- 19 Support your partner to make informed decisions if required.
- 20 Help your partner and baby feel loved, safe and supported by encouraging them in a soft, soothing tone of voice.
- 21 Speak up for your partner when they need you to.
- 22 If you need to take a break, ask the midwife to support your partner, pick a good time and don't take too long.



## Working as a team post birth

- 1 Getting to know your baby is an exciting process of discovery. Try new things and observe their reactions. Be curious and try to avoid frustration. You'll soon work out what they like.
- 2 Looking after a new born baby is a full time job – especially in the first few months. You and your partner may not have time or energy for anything else.
- 3 Take time off work – if you can.
- 4 Work out what needs to be done around the house. Who will get the groceries, cook dinner, do housework? Can you get family and friends to help?
- 5 Don't worry if you don't feel like a dad straight away – keep trying – it will come.
- 6 Babies love to spend one-on-one time with dads. They respond best to warmth, love and sensitivity. They thrive when you talk to them, sing to them, change their nappies and give them a bath. Get involved in dressing, soothing and playing.
- 7 Your baby's brain develops when you imitate their movement and sounds – it helps them feel safe and loved.
- 8 Babies thrive when breastfed so support breastfeeding if your partner has chosen to – Set up the space with pillows and blankets? Bring the baby? Cut up some fruit or other snacks? A glass of water or juice?
- 9 Your baby likes it when you're patient, gentle and kind.
- 10 Keep communicating every day with your partner about everything to do with your baby. You're a parenting team – share the things you've learned and help each other get to know your little one
- 11 Ask your partner how they are feeling about it all and if there is anything more you can do to support.
- 12 Give your partner regular breaks from the baby – suggest they catch up with friends, get some exercise or even just relax while you care for your baby.
- 13 Babies love pram walks and meeting your friends.
- 14 Regularly tell your partner you're proud of them and that they are a great mother.
- 15 Look out for signs of depression and or anxiety in you and your partner – share any concerns with a health professional.
- 16 Spend one-on-one time with your partner to maintain your connection – the best thing you can give your baby is a healthy relationship.
- 17 Find other dads to talk to – most dads love to talk about their kids.
- 18 Physical intimacy may take some time to return be patient.
- 19 Don't be hard on yourself or your partner if you don't get things right all the time.
- 20 Make the most of this special time and above all else have fun!