



The house is upside down, and everything feels different and uncomfortable ...

Being a new dad can be both exciting and terrifying. It can be hard to know what to do during pregnancy and the initial few months when the baby is born. Have a read of some of these tips which have come from dads...

PREGNANCY IS A GOOD TIME TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR PARTNER:

- > Who will do what – who will get up to the baby at night, who will do the washing, Maternal Child Health visits, baths, nappies etc.
- > How do you like to be helped/supported? (e.g. everyone likes to feel supported by their partner, you may want someone to tell about your day, or you may prefer practical help with the baby – e.g. Some women may like to talk about their day, some men may prefer practical help with the baby, and everyone likes to be complimented when they do a good job)
- > How would you like to bring up your child? What is your style? Would you like to change anything about the way you were raised?
- > How you feel about yelling or smacking – what are the rules about physical violence or verbal abuse in your house?
- > How do you both like to relax and de-stress – what little treats could you look forward to while caring for baby in the first few months?
- > Do drugs and/or alcohol play a part in your home life? Will this need to change?
- > Who else can support your family? Friends, neighbours? Other family members? Will they be supportive or will they get in the way?
- > Is there a service in the community you could go to for help if needed? Doctor? Maternal Child and Health Nurse (MCHN)? Counselling service? Parenting services?

TIPS FOR DADS WHEN THE BABY ARRIVES:

- > It's VERY IMPORTANT to support your partner by telling them that they are doing a great job!! Give them a break by taking the baby for walks, offering cups of tea, sending them to the coffee shop, running a bath etc. These ideas work best when the baby is content. If the baby is crying this will take priority.
- > You may feel a bit left out when the baby first arrives, and miss your partner's attention, but this is a time for you to build your relationship with your new baby too, and if you work together, your relationship can grow stronger and closer through parenting together. These little things will make a big difference – try them.



- > Don't worry too much about your sex life disappearing it will return if you are a loving and patient partner. Be helpful around your home, get involved with the baby, be interested in your partners feelings, complement your partner, do the dishes, hang out the washing etc... these are the best aphrodisiacs!
- > Don't worry about spoiling the baby, just try to meet its needs and be patient – it does get easier. Crying new-borns are telling you what they need – it's way too early for discipline – aim for a gentle flexible routine. Generally they like to feed – play – sleep in an ongoing cycle.
- > Don't be put off if your partner guides you in what to do, that doesn't mean you are doing it wrong – remind them that Dads have different ways of doing things and as they get older babies often like the variety. So long as they are safe, reasonably happy, fed, and cleanish... you are doing it right.
- > Help your partner when she is breast feeding by bringing her water, pillows, reading material, foot rest etc. If you are using formula make sure that you help prepare the bottles so they are ready to go.
- > When in doubt and the baby won't settle pushing the pram around the streets for 15–30 mins will help you relax and the movement usually settles the baby too. If the baby is in a routine stick to it – babies love a predictable life. If the baby is very hungry and you can't give them a bottle, there is not much you can do – they usually scream until they get fed but it doesn't actually hurt them so try to stay calm and find mum. Put them in a safe place and walk away if you feel angry or if you feel out of control, get help. Having children can be the best and hardest thing you will do, and can bring out the best and worst in you. Be kind to yourself, but get help if you need it.
- > Talk to other dads, you'll see that some people have easy, settled babies and some have more challenging ones who don't sleep much, who have reflux, who need more patting and settling – a lot of it is just luck – push on and think positive, it will improve. This is a great time to learn about yourself and who you want to be as a partner and as a parent.
- > Create a checklist of things that you know have worked to settle the baby so far on different occasions. Nappy change, feeding time, burping, rocking, walking with pram, music etc...



Above all let the little things go, be supportive towards each other, its challenging but ultimately the most rewarding thing you will ever experience!! If you find you are struggling Raising Children's Network, <http://raisingchildren.net.au/> has some wonderful resources. Parentline is also fantastic at listening and giving tips over the phone, google the number for your state or territory.