

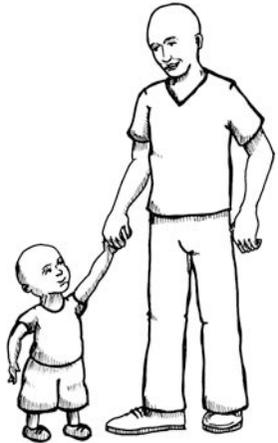
How will I feel when the baby arrives?

When your baby is born, you may feel a mixture of emotions, such as happiness, excitement, worry or anxiety: this is normal. Many fathers feel that way:

“I was so happy and scared at the same time. I didn’t know what to say or what to do. After a while I started to realise what was happening and now I’m proud to have a baby girl.”

How will I know how to take care of my baby?

- Helping and supporting your partner during pregnancy is already an important first step: you are making sure that she and your baby are healthy.



- Caring for a baby can be quite difficult and tiring. You may find it difficult to adjust to your new life and responsibilities as a father.

“I was so scared of being a bad father, I didn’t even want to hold him at first. I only tried when my wife showed me how to do it. Now I won’t stop holding him.”

- Try and get support from family and friends to help you with the changes and responsibilities that come with having a baby.
- You and your partner are both facing the same challenges of becoming a parent. She may even have the same worries as you do. So talk about how you feel with her, and find solutions together.
- Raising a child is a privilege: as a father, you have a unique role in providing for and educating your child. It takes a lot of effort, but is a worthwhile challenge.

YOUR RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



Caring for mothers.
Caring for the future.

www.pmhp.za.org



Pregnancy: Information for Fathers

Having a baby can be a wonderful experience. It can be a worthwhile and admirable challenge to provide your baby safety and protection. When you take part in his or her emotional, social and physical development, it gives you a chance to reaffirm your caring and providing for your new baby and your family. Many future fathers wonder about pregnancy, labour and fatherhood. This information could help you be better prepared for what is happening.

Why is my partner’s body hurting?

Your partner’s body is changing. Some physical symptoms may last a short time, and others for longer. Some of these may be quite painful:

- Breasts grow larger and may become sensitive
- Morning sickness, frequent urination
- Joint aches and cramps
- Excessive saliva
- Feet and hands swell up
- Constipation and stomach pains
- Back ache (walking, getting up & down is difficult)

No one knows why, but some fathers can experience the same signs during their partner’s pregnancy. Don’t worry if you show some signs: they will go away after your baby is born.

Why is my partner always tired?

- When the baby grows, it takes some of your partner's energy, so she gets tired very easily.
- Usually, she should have more energy during the second trimester. However, she may be especially exhausted at the end of her pregnancy.



Why is my partner upset all the time?

- The physical changes of pregnancy are linked to changing hormone levels: this affects mood.
- At times your partner may be very excited, and at others, very miserable and irritable. Try not to take these personally: these are mood swings, and are often present through the pregnancy.
- Sometimes she may have problems sleeping. When this happens, she's even more tired than usual, so she may become more irritable or impatient.
- Your partner may also be upset because she craves certain foods and feels sick from other foods, even those she liked before getting pregnant.

Why is my partner not interested in sex?

It is common for pregnant women not to want sex sometimes, but it does not mean she doesn't love you. There are many other reasons for this:

- Pregnancy can affect your partner's need for sex, and this can change through the pregnancy.
- Pregnancy can also affect the way your partner feels during sex.
- The growing baby can take up your partner's energy.
- Your partner may be in a bad mood, feeling sick or worried.
- Your partner may be embarrassed about her new body shape.



Can I have sex with my partner when she's pregnant?

- If your partner agrees, you can continue to have sex during pregnancy: this should not harm the baby. However, be careful not to put all your weight on her belly.
- If your partner has or develops medical complications, you may be advised not to have sex anymore until the baby arrives. You could find other ways of being intimate (e.g. massages).
- If you or your partner notice any unusual signs during or after sex (e.g., abdominal cramps, abnormal discharge or vaginal bleeding), let the midwife know. Don't be afraid to ask questions or share any concerns with her.

What can I do to help during pregnancy?

Mothers say that it is easier to cope with the pregnancy when they feel supported. There are different ways you can help:

- Stay calm if she is having mood swings or when she is irritable.
- Avoid arguments and respond to her needs.
- Give her a foot rub or massage occasionally.
- Go to antenatal check-ups with her to show that you are involved.
- Help with household duties and childcare as much as possible.

How can I help during labour and delivery?

Labour can be a difficult time for your partner, and there are ways you can make it easier for her:

- Once contractions start, you can make sure that your partner rests and drinks fruit juice or rooibos tea with honey, so she is ready for what is to come. You can also rub her legs and massage her lower back.
- When contractions become closer, your partner may be in pain: it helps if you stay positive and supportive during this period.

- Delivery can last between 15 min to an hour: if you wish, you can ask the nurse that you be present when your partner gives birth. This way, you can encourage and praise her on how well she is doing. You will also have the special opportunity of being with your child as he/she comes into the world.



How long does it take for hormone levels to be back to normal?

- It can take 9-12 months for your partner's body to go back to how it was before. Wait until 6 weeks after birth before having sex. It may take a bit more time before your partner is ready to have a normal sex life again.
- It is possible that your partner feels a bit down after giving birth: she may feel frustration, fear and guilt. This is common and these feelings usually go away after a few days.
- In some cases, these feelings stay and get worse. More signs appear, such as change in sleep patterns, appetite and mood: this could be postnatal depression or anxiety. If you think your partner may be suffering from this, talk to a health worker about it.

What happens after my baby is born?

- Find out how long postnatal care is offered at your clinic, so you can have your baby weighed, measured etc. After that, go to your nearest baby clinic as soon as possible.
- It is important to ask about contraception and family planning at your clinic – there are several options to choose from.