

Guide 8: Helping Dads Get Involved

How can dads get hands-on and chip in to make pregnancy a smooth and enjoyable experience for mum?



It takes two to tango, as they say. How true — especially when it comes to pregnancy! Mummy might be carrying the baby, but she needs all the support and encouragement she can get from Daddy, too. Where to begin, you might ask. Here are some simple and practical tips to get new dads involved.

Dealing with Changes

An event as momentous as this is going to bring about changes to the balance in your relationship. Your wife is growing a new life inside her, so it's not surprising that she will focus on the baby, which may make you feel a bit disconnected or a little left out of some parts of the process.

This is perfectly normal, but rather than feel left out, encourage your wife to share her feelings — both physical and emotional — with you, so that you can bond over every foetus kick, get through morning sickness, and read up on pregnancy-related information as a team.

What's more, don't forget to make time for "non-baby" moments. Not everything in your life has to revolve 100 percent around the pregnancy. Plan activities just like you used to, from bingeing on TV shows to packing a Sunday picnic at East Coast (maybe bring extra surprise portions of whatever your wife is craving right now).

Managing Stress and Anxiety

That awestruck realisation of "I'm going to be a father" happens at different times to different dads. It might be at the first pregnancy test or scan, as you begin to paint your baby's room, or even at delivery. It's a big moment that may come with some stress or worries, which is normal. You'll only discover how common it is when you share your feelings, ideally with someone who has been through it. A chat with your own father or a friend who has kids might have them saying, "Ah yes, I remember feeling exactly like that!"

Another great way to stop stress from overwhelming you is to leap into action. Each task done or preparation ticked off your long to-do list will help you feel more in control. Figuring out what to pack in your go-bag when labour kicks in or planning baby names for your little one can help build up your confidence!

Additionally, me-time always helps. Preparing to be a good father doesn't mean obsessing about it every minute of the day. Remember to engage in your usual hobbies, relax, and enjoy the process.

Dealing with Finances

Sometimes, we are often so caught up in the emotional preparation for being a dad that it's easy to forget to plan the financial side as well. Feeling lost? Again, reach out to those who have done it before, be it your parents or close friends, they will likely be able to give you genuine and realistic advice.

A good place to get basic information is your doctor's office. Many medical professionals will have materials that outline estimated medical fees.

This is also a great time for you and your wife to do a stock-take of your personal and shared finances. You might find that you have funds that aren't earning interest and can go into a savings account, ready to accumulate over the years for when your child heads off to university.

Finally, don't forget that there are professionals out there such as financial consultants, who will be able to lend you their expertise in managing your finances efficiently.

Helping Your Wife Manage Her Emotions

As much as pregnancy is a shared experience, your wife will be experiencing a heady mix of hormonal changes that will affect her physically and emotionally. Mood swings, fatigue and anxiety about the upcoming labour are totally normal.

Offering a range of practical advice like reading self-help books or taking vitamins might be a solution, but sometimes the best answer is just to be there with a warm smile and a listening ear and maybe a foot rub or two.

Making Decisions Together

Don't forget that while it's great to be a researching machine, the information you share doesn't always have to be practical. A cute baby meme or motherhood-related joke might be just the thing to put a smile on her face. Many couples find it both useful and fun to keep a shared journal of the pregnancy journey, to monitor changes, vent frustrations (yes, a single page with "Today I'm grumpy!" is perfectly fine) and in years to come, be a treasured keepsake.

Going to Antenatal Classes and Care Visits Together

It's important to make sure that your wife doesn't feel like she's going through the pregnancy alone, so if you do suggest an antenatal class, why not accompany her? Not only is this a great way to pick up information to prepare you for labour, but going as a couple may also help you make new friends who are also undergoing this journey.

Helping During Labour and Delivery

The big day has arrived! Having read up and gone to classes, you will know roughly what to expect, though every labour is different and special. Here are some tips for you during labour:

- Don't shy away. Be close by to provide reassurance to your wife.
- Physical contact can be a great calming influence, so hold her hand, wipe her face and stroke her hair, whatever she wants.
- Assign yourself the role of chief hydrator and feed her regular sips of water.
- Many mothers experience back pain and sore muscles during labour, so be at hand to give a gentle and soothing massage.
- Changing positions may also help to relieve sore muscles, although your wife may find it difficult to shift on her own, so be there to help her.
- Time to use those breathing techniques you mastered in pre-birth class. With the stress and disorientation brought on by her labour, your wife may have forgotten everything she's learnt. Remind her, and take long slow breaths alongside her.

There you have it. These tips should help you and your wife embark on your most incredible journey together. But we've saved the most important tip for last: remember to enjoy every moment!

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