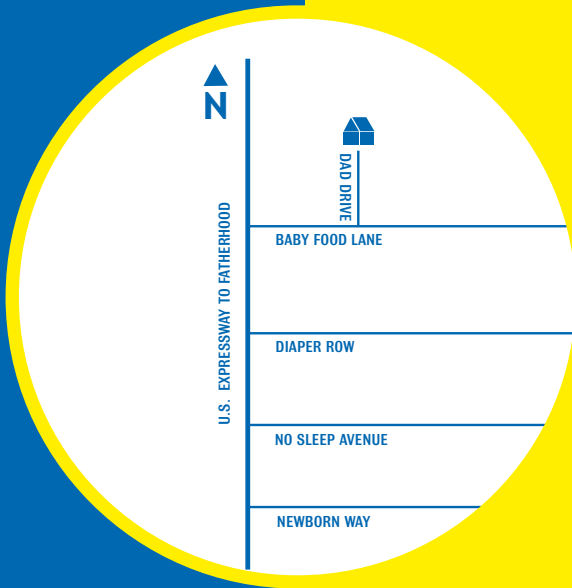


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# Prenatal Guide Checklist

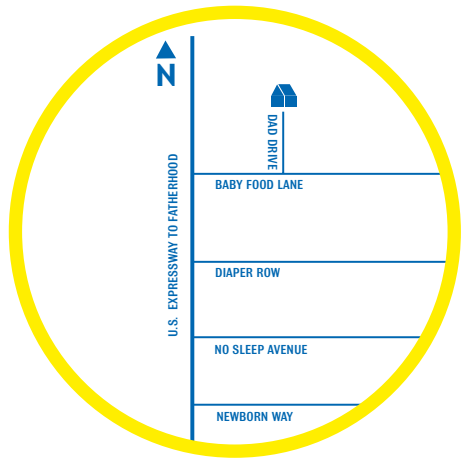
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# Maps for New Dads

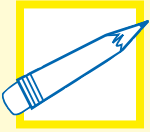
## A Guide To Taking Care of Your New Baby



### **Welcome to Fatherhood! Let's Get Started!**

There are not many guys in the world who can actually say they knew how to be a father before it happened. This guide tells you what new dads have figured out—and wished they had known in the beginning—about this mysterious business called “being a father.”

By sharing some of these lessons, together we can take some of the mystery out of the process. Don't worry if you feel lost right now. You'll catch on. And to help you along, we'll be offering lots of useful thoughts and ideas. You'll find handy "DAD TIPS" that give helpful hints about being a dad. They look like this:



**New Dad Tip:**

This is where you'll find ways to make being a dad easier.

Every now and then we're going to run into a technical word. No problem. Just look for this:



**I Need a Clue!**

In these boxes we'll give you easy-to-understand definitions of tough words.

Get ready to learn a few things, make a few mistakes, and...BECOME ONE TERRIFIC DAD!

# Prenatal: Before the Baby Is Born



## How Do You Feel about Being a Dad?

When some men find out that they are going to be a father, they are excited from the very beginning. Others go into shock, and some just pretend it's not happening. For some dads it doesn't sink in until the baby is almost born.

There is more than one correct way to feel about becoming a parent. For many new parents, a baby is good news. For others, it takes a little more time to warm up to the idea. It's a big change in parents' lives.

Being pregnant is very real for your child's mother because a baby is growing inside her. It may be harder for you to see that anything has changed. You might feel happy, afraid, confused, cornered...or all these things (and more) at once!

Talking with the expecting mother (who is probably as scared as you are) can make you feel a lot better. Try to relax. In a while you will warm up to the idea. Picking names is a good way to get both of you feeling more comfortable with the idea of having your own child. For some fathers it happens when they go for doctor visits with expecting mothers or when they first see the sonogram.



### **I Need a Clue!** **What is a “sonogram”?**

Another word for it is “ultrasound.” It's a painless test to see how the baby is doing inside Mom. It uses sound waves to draw a picture of the baby (or...babies). It's also used to figure out when the baby should be born...and if it's a boy or girl.

Remember, you may have many different feelings when you find out you're going to be a dad. In fact, you might even feel differently now than you did when you first got the news. Think about this: There is a little person slowly growing inside Mom...growing into someone who will look like you, think like you, and act like you, and who needs your love and support even before he or she is born. It's all pretty amazing.

## What to Expect When You're Expecting.



Forty weeks. Sounds like a long time. Well, it's REALLY LONG for the mother. Here's what's happening during this time. . .

YOUR BABY is growing and changing everyday!

YOUR BABY'S MOTHER is going through some changes herself.

YOU MAY THINK that all you have to do is wait around, but there will also be some changes in store for you in the months ahead.

There's a lot you can be doing to help your child's mother get ready for your baby. We'll talk about that more as we go. First, you need to understand what your baby is doing to get ready for you.

### **The First Trimester (Weeks 1-13)**

During the first trimester, your baby goes from a fertilized egg to a fetus. By four weeks your baby is about the size of a grain of rice but is already starting to grow eyes, a spinal cord, lungs and a stomach. Your baby's heart is beating...but it's on the outside of the body.





## **I Need a Clue: What is a “fetus”?**

During the first eight weeks of pregnancy, the unborn child is called an embryo. After that, the unborn child is called a fetus (FEET-us).

By the end of the third month the baby is only 2-3 inches long and weighs less than an ounce, but signs of their gender have already developed. Your doctor can tell you whether you will have a son or a daughter if you want to know.

**?** Do you want to find out which it will be?

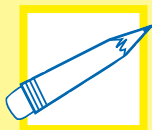
### **The Second Trimester (Weeks 14-27)**

When this stage starts, your baby will grow quickly. His heart beats twice as fast as yours. In a little while he will start punching and kicking. Put your hand on Mom’s stomach — you can feel him by week 22 or so! Soon he’ll be able to hear sounds coming from outside, so watch your language! Start having long talks with him. Do it a lot. The more you talk to him now, the more he will know your voice when he is born and be able to connect your voice. At 24 weeks, your baby is about 14 inches long and weighs about two pounds. He will have fingernails and hair. His brain is growing very quickly now.

**?** What could you say to your baby right now? How does it make you feel when you talk to him?

### **The Third Trimester (Weeks 28-40)**

This is when everyone starts counting the days! At around 28 weeks your baby can move in rhythm to music. Very cool. Try talking to him while playing some special music. When he's not dancing, he might spend a lot of time sucking his thumb! By 32 weeks your baby will react to your touch. He can also open his eyes...and recognize your voice! His organs are almost finished, but he's still growing, getting ready to work on his own outside your partner's body. Pretty soon he will twist around into the head-down position and stay that way until he's born (head-down makes giving birth easier). The more you talk to the baby, play music and feel him moving around, the more it helps him grow in a healthy way! During these last few weeks, his nervous system, brain and lungs are still developing. He is also gaining weight so that he can easily face the energy demands of the external world. These last several weeks are essential to a healthy start in life.



#### **New Dad Tip:**

Make sure your partner goes to the doctor and eats right! Babies don't eat when they're inside Mom. They get all the good stuff they need from her. That means she needs to eat well to make sure the growing baby is healthy. What you do to help your partner stay healthy helps your baby be healthy!



# Dad Fears...There Are Plenty!

## “What do I need to know about this baby business?”

After years and years of detailed studies, researchers have finally come up with an answer to this question...LEARN EVERYTHING YOU CAN!! You're in luck! You are not the only one ever to have kids. Lots of guys just like you have done it and lived to tell about it. Talk to other people who have gone through it, especially dads. Ask lots of other dads and ask lots of questions. You'll get more than a few takes on the whole “Dad thing.”

## “What am I going to do? Should I drop out of school? Should I get a full-time job? Where will we live?”

When you stop and think about it, you might start to worry about whether you can take care of a new baby and give her the things she needs. When they first find out about a pregnancy, new dads can feel a lot of different things: happy, scared, loving and worried about the future.

Here is a short list of what some new dads worry about:

- Not being able to pay for all the things the baby needs
- Not being able to do whatever it is a father does
- Not being able (or willing) to love the baby enough
- Making the same mistakes you think your father made
- Not being in control of your life
- Not being able to live up to what you think a father is
- Not being able to handle basic things like feeding, clothing, crying and taking care of her when she's sick
- That your partner will think you don't love her or the baby if you tell her what you're afraid of
- That things will never be the same with your partner again

**ACTIVITY** **Whew!** How's that for a few worries? And that's only the tip of the iceberg. What are some things about being a dad that worry you? List them here: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Dads Make a Difference.



You are helping to bring a baby into the world, so you have already made a difference, and you will continue making a difference whether you stay in the baby’s life or not. The question is whether you make a positive difference or a negative one. Being there for your baby will give her a better chance to grow up healthy, strong and smart. Not being there will make a difference because she will grow up missing out on what dads do. She will grow up wanting and needing her Dad. ***What kind of difference do you want to make?***

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# Settling Down



So your baby is coming, and you and your baby's mother are partners in raising a healthy, happy child. OK. So have you been thinking about the 'M' word?

**MARRIAGE!** Have the two of you been talking about it since you found out she was pregnant? Bet she's thought about it. Bet you have, too. Here are some facts about marriage. When kids are raised by their own parents in healthy, MARRIED families, great things are more likely to happen!

## The Kids:

- Are healthier, both physically and mentally
- Are less likely to be poor
- Do better in school
- Have lower dropout rates
- Have fewer teen pregnancies
- Get better jobs when they get out of school
- Are less likely to abuse drugs
- Have fewer run-ins with law enforcement

## The Parents:

- Live longer, healthier lives
- Make more money than unmarried parents
- Have more money by the time they're ready to retire than single people

But it's not just any marriage that makes these things work out... it's a healthy marriage! Everybody has problems and arguments. But people who want the best for themselves, their partners and their kids learn to cut each other some slack...and work things out! No question, marriage has lots of benefits.

## **A Healthy Marriage.**

So what's getting in the way of getting married? What keeps you from taking that next step? Is it thoughts like:

- "I'm not sure I'm ready for that commitment."
- "We don't always see things the same way."
- "Shouldn't I wait 'til we're always getting along?"
- "If I could just get a good job, we'd have the money for a nice wedding with a ring and all that."
- "There's a lot I need to handle first...a job, a car, a good place to live..."

### **ACTIVITY** What are some of your thoughts about marriage?

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Some people want everything to be just right; all worked out...everything handled and all together before they get married. But the truth is...MARRIAGE ISN'T THE FINISH LINE! Life doesn't happen that way! NOBODY IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD has ever gotten EVERYTHING worked out! Put marriage last and it won't ever happen. Marriage is about working together to get all those things you both want. What's important is that you both care about each other, you care about your kids, and you want more for yourself and them than you had when you were a kid.

### **So What Can I Do?**

Since you asked, here are a couple of suggestions...Look around for people who seem to have marriages that work. Ask them what they think about marriage, what it's been like for them. Find out about community and faith-based organizations that help couples who are thinking about marriage. You and your partner could talk with one of them.

## Just the Facts



When dads spend time with their kids from the very beginning and work to keep close feelings between them, good things happen to the kids.

- They are more likely to be active, healthy and strong as babies, toddlers, preschoolers and school-aged children.
- Most of them do better on developmental tests.
- They are much less likely to be violent, anti-social, dangerous or convicted criminals.
- They wait longer before they start having sex.
- They are more likely to go to school and stay in school. They also are less likely to repeat a grade.
- Both boys and girls do better at being independent, having self-control and being leaders.
- Girls have healthier relationships later in their lives, especially with males. Remember, Dad is the first man they get to know.

**ACTIVITY** **Think about your father.** What kind of difference did he make in your life? Do you want the same for your baby, or do you want things to be different? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Get Involved and Stay Involved!



If you care about your baby and stay close to him, YOU can really make a DIFFERENCE in your baby's life. Let's face it. It's easy to make a baby. Being a dad is different. You have to be involved. Some people think you have to be a woman to understand and care about having babies. NOT TRUE! As a man, there's a lot you can do...starting NOW!

There are people who can help make sure Mom and the baby are both doing OK while she's pregnant. The thing is, they don't always think to let Dad know how things are going. So get in there and ask questions. Get information for yourself. Be involved!

## Prenatal Visits: Why Are They So Important?



### I Need a Clue: What are prenatal visits?

Prenatal means "before birth." These are the regular doctor visits Mom needs to go to as soon as she thinks she's pregnant...and all through her pregnancy. ***They're very important!***

### Why are prenatal visits such a big deal?

These visits are very important for keeping track of how the baby is growing and whether Mom and baby are both healthy. ***If there's a problem, you want to know it as soon as possible!***



## What happens at prenatal visits?

The expecting mother and the baby will be examined by her OB/GYN. There are other providers in addition to OBs who can provide prenatal care as well as attend births in Texas. These include Certified Nurse Midwives, Licensed Midwives and Family Practice Physicians.



### **I Need a Clue: OB/GYN? That's not a word!**

No, it's an abbreviation. OB is short for Obstetrics (or care for the pregnant woman and baby during pregnancy). GYN is short for gynecology (female care).

The doctor asks questions about how the mother is doing and checks her and the baby by feeling her belly and checking her internally to find out how the baby is growing. She may use a special scope for this...or even do a sonogram. Ask your doctor if he can give you a copy of your baby's sonogram picture. Seeing what he or she looks like inside Mom is exciting!

## How often are prenatal visits?

A regular schedule of prenatal visits goes something like this:

- About once each month during the first six months of pregnancy
- Every two weeks during the seventh and eighth month of pregnancy
- Weekly in the ninth month of pregnancy

It's important to go to all of the prenatal visits! ***It's about your baby's health and safety so MARK YOUR CALENDAR!***

## Why should I go to prenatal visits?

There are three very short, simple reasons you should go: To be there for your baby; to support your baby's mother; and to keep from leaving yourself out of the whole "baby thing" right from the start. In other words, you have a lot to do with your baby's healthy growth and development. Prenatal visits are a way for you to find out what's going on with your baby and how you can help him stay healthy. And there's more! They're a great way to show your partner you care about her and the baby...and that makes things even better between you and Mom. Going to prenatal visits puts you in the 1st Class Dad category.

**FACTOID:** *A national study said that the single most important thing that decides whether a woman goes to prenatal visits is the support of the father.*

## Don't leave yourself out of this baby thing!

It's easy to come up with a lot of reasons for not going:

- "Nobody likes going to the doctor." This includes the mother. She'll feel better with you there.
- "It's too hard to get off work for prenatal visits." Ask your boss about it. Many give time off for them.
- "But...I'm not the one who is having a baby." The real patient is the baby-your baby-and he needs you.
- "She didn't tell me about the appointment." Don't wait for her to tell you. Ask! You're showing support when you bring it up.

Try to go to ALL the visits, but if you can't make some of them, ask your partner about how they went. Make a statement. Tell the world, ***"I'm a dad. I'm going to be important to my baby and his mother!"***

## What kind of questions should I ask the doctor?

Some of the questions you'll need to ask are:

- How long have you been in practice?
- Where do you deliver babies?
- Can we visit the hospital before the baby is born?
- Do you let family or coaches be there for the delivery?
- How many sonograms should Mom have?
- Can I be there when the baby comes?
- What percentage of your deliveries are by cesarean? If this is necessary, can I be there for it?

Are there any other questions you can think of? \_\_\_\_\_

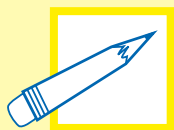
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**FACTOID:** *Dads who support their baby's mother and get along with her, even if they don't live together, often have kids who do better in school.*



### New Dad Tip:

When you and the mother take the tour of the facility, be sure to ask about when and where and how it's all going to happen. That way you'll know what to expect when the big day comes.



### I Need a Clue: What is a cesarean?

It's the birth of the baby by surgery. A cesarean is also called a c-section. The natural way for a baby to be born is through the vagina, or birth canal. Sometimes, if your baby's or the mother's health is at risk, the doctor has to make an incision in the mother's belly and uterus and bring the baby out that way. Because a c-section is a major operation, recovery takes longer than from a vaginal birth.

## IMPORTANT PRENATAL TESTS

What is the test?	What's it looking for?	Why?	What happens afterwards?
<b>STDs - Sexually Transmitted Diseases</b>	STDs like syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhea	STDs can cause serious problems for the baby's organs if not found early	If any STD is found, doctors usually treat it with antibiotics
<b>Urine protein</b>	Signs of high blood pressure because of the pregnancy	High blood pressure can cause liver and kidney problems for the mother	Her doctor might recommend bed rest or early delivery
<b>Diabetes</b>	Blood-sugar level	Diabetes can cause birth defects in your baby	Doctor might put your partner on low carbohydrate diet or insulin shots
<b>Rh test</b>	The protein in your partner's red blood cells. Most people are Rh+ (positive)	If your partner is Rh- (negative) then her red blood cells could attack the baby's red blood cells	A shot called RhoGAM
<b>Toxoplasmosis</b>	A bug that is found in cat feces and raw meat	If not treated, it can cause damage to your baby's brain, liver and eyes	If the test shows your partner is not immune to toxoplasmosis, help her stay away from cats, litter boxes, and any meat that isn't fully cooked
<b>Alpha fetoprotein</b>	Looks at how much protein is made by your baby's liver	Too much protein can cause birth defects. Levels of protein that are too low may cause other problems	Talk with your doctor
<b>Group B strep</b>	Bacteria in your partner's reproductive tract	In rare cases it can cause death of baby	Talk with your doctor
<b>Anemia</b>	Tests for oxygen/iron in your partner's red blood cells	Low levels of iron in your partner's body are not good for her or the baby	The doctor may ask her to take vitamins with high iron in them

# Making a Healthy Baby – Dad’s Part



## How can I help to make sure my baby is healthy?

Whether you live with the mother or not, be there for her and help as much as you can. You could take a childbirth class together to show her you care about her. Do your best to make sure she eats healthy foods, takes walks and doesn't get stressed. Spend as much time with your kid (even while he's still inside Mom) as you can. **Do not smoke, drink or use drugs.** Everybody knows these things are dangerous to the baby if Mom uses them. Well, they can be just as dangerous if YOU use them. Smoke in the air is bad for the health of both Mom and baby. Drugs and alcohol make you lose control, and that can be dangerous to everybody.

**FACTOID:** *One recent national study showed that if dad quit smoking during his partner's pregnancy, she was much less likely to smoke during pregnancy as well.*

**ACTIVITY** What are you already doing to make sure your baby will be healthy? \_\_\_\_\_

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**ACTIVITY** What else can you do during the rest of the pregnancy to help Mom and your baby be healthy? \_\_\_\_\_

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# Show Me the Money!



After the idea of having a baby sinks in, new dads start thinking about how much everything is going to cost. Doctor bills, food, clothing, cribs, diapers... WOW! There are steps you can take to make sure you are prepared for all the financial costs of being a new parent.

## Budget Worksheet

Putting together a budget helps you know how best to spend your money on the necessary items for your new baby. It also will give you an idea of how much money you need to pay for all these items.

### BUDGET WORKSHEET

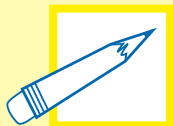
Monthly Income		Monthly Expenses	
Wages from your paycheck	\$ _____	Rent/ Mortgage	\$ _____
Public Assistance	\$ _____	Property Taxes/ Insurance	\$ _____
Social Security	\$ _____	Electric/Utility Bill	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____	Water Bill	\$ _____
		Telephone/ Mobile Phone Bill	\$ _____
		Food	\$ _____
<b>Total Income:</b>	\$ _____	Transportation/Gas	\$ _____
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	\$ _____	Gas/Oil Utility Bill	\$ _____
<b>Difference:</b>	\$ _____	Health Insurance	\$ _____
		Car Payment	\$ _____
		Car Insurance	\$ _____

## BUDGET WORKSHEET (CONT.)

<p><b>If you are not making enough money to pay for all your expenses, think about what you can do to cut costs.</b></p> <p>Some costs are fixed, meaning they cannot be changed.</p> <p>Others are flexible, meaning you can reduce them.</p> <p><b>Ask yourself:</b></p> <p>Can I eliminate cable TV?</p> <p>Do I turn off the lights when I leave a room?</p> <p>Is it possible to walk or bike instead of driving?</p>			
		Savings	\$ _____
		Cable TV Bill	\$ _____
		Personal Expenses (toiletries, clothes, etc.)	\$ _____
		Other	\$ _____
	<b>New Baby Expenses:</b>		
		Day Care	\$ _____
		Clothing	\$ _____
		Diapers and Wipes	\$ _____
		Formula	\$ _____
		Baby Toys	\$ _____
		Baby Toiletries (shampoo, soap, lotion, powder)	\$ _____
	<b>One-Time Baby Expenses:</b>		
		Infant Car Seat	\$ _____
		Stroller	\$ _____
	Pacifiers	\$ _____	
	Diaper Bag	\$ _____	
	Diaper Pail	\$ _____	
	Crib	\$ _____	
	Changing Table	\$ _____	
	Baby Monitor	\$ _____	
	Bottles	\$ _____	
	Highchair	\$ _____	
	Utensils	\$ _____	
	Plates, Bowls, Dishes	\$ _____	

### **Spend on What Is Important.**

Figure out what the important items are and spend your money on them. This may mean that you will have to prioritize your spending to pay for diapers, baby clothes, day care and baby food. Keep in mind that breast-feeding can save over \$1,000 in direct costs! Use your monthly budget to prepare yourself for these decisions.



### **New Dad Tip:**

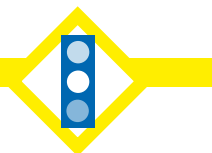
Ask friends and family about cribs, playpens and other hand-me-down items that could help keep costs down. Be sure everything is clean and works correctly!

### **Save for the Future.**

Even with all these new baby costs, it is never a bad time to start saving. Putting a small amount of money into a savings account each month can help you prepare for all the unexpected things that arise as your baby grows. Think about saving at least \$25 a month for unexpected costs or big expenses, like your child's first bicycle...or his college education!



# What You Can Do to Get Ready



**Get involved early.** This lets the mother and others know that you care and want to be part of your baby's life.

**Support your baby's mother.** Go to as many prenatal care visits as you can.

**Plan and set up the nursery.** Get a crib and put it together if you need to. Stockpile lots of diapers. Make sure you have all the stuff you need and that it's easy to find and use.

**Get a car seat!** Call the hospital and ask if car seats are given to newborns or where you can get one.

## **ACTIVITY** Make important plans with the expecting mother.

Make sure to talk about what you will do when it's time to go to the hospital.

Who will you call when she's ready to go to the hospital?

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Who will you call when she's at the hospital?

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If you're at work, how will she get in touch with you?

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What clothes and stuff will your partner need to take with her?

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When you get to the hospital, where do you check in?

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What are some of the important papers you will need to bring?

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# What's Up With the New Mom?



Here is a list of things that your partner might go through during the next forty weeks:

## PHYSICALLY

**First Few Months:** Morning sickness, heartburn, headaches, tiredness and tender breasts.

**Later on:** She may be moody at times, crave weird foods, begin to feel the baby moving and have that “pregnant glow.”

**Last Few Months:** She may have more cramping, be sleepy more often, find it hard to get comfortable, walk differently and find sex uncomfortable.

## EMOTIONALLY

**First Few Months:** She may be happy that she's pregnant, fear that you won't find her attractive, worry about what will happen when the baby comes, worry about miscarriage, and may have decreased sex drive.

**Later on:** She may depend on you more and more, start to be forgetful, start bonding with the baby and be sensitive about her changing figure.

**Last Few Months:** She may worry about the labor and delivery, she may worry that you won't love her after the baby comes, and sometimes she may be short tempered.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP THE NEW MOM?

### Do Nice Things for Her...

1. Give back rubs and foot massages!
2. Take her to the movies or dinner!
3. Give her lots of hugs. Studies show that the more you hug your partner, the more she'll hug the baby!
4. Do some housework!
5. Send her a love letter!

**Stock up on Healthy Food...**

1. Unsweetened cereals
2. Tomato and/or vegetable juice
3. Skim milk
4. Fresh eggs
5. Natural peanut butter
6. Fresh fruit and vegetables like carrots, celery, cucumbers, tomatoes and grapes
7. Crackers
8. Frozen berries

**ACTIVITY** Think of other helpful things and write them here!

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Here are a few easy recipes you can make for an expecting mother. They're a good way to show her you care about her...and her health.

## POWER SHAKE

- 1/2 cup skim milk
- 1 banana
- 12 strawberries
- Juice of 2 oranges

Combine the ingredients in a blender or food processor and serve over crushed ice or chilled.

## OPEN-FACED OMELETTE

- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon of cilantro (finely chopped)
- 1/4 cup of green and/or red onion (diced)
- Black pepper to taste

Take yolk out of the eggs. Stir egg whites in a bowl until foamy and pour into frying pan. Turn heat on low. When egg whites start to cook, put the other ingredients in. Cook until egg becomes firm. Put onto plate and serve.

## BASIC QUICK SNACKS

- Peel and slice carrots or celery to munch on anytime.
- Boil eggs and peel them.
- Make some trail mix out of dried fruits, nuts, raisins and sunflower seeds.

**ACTIVITY** What ideas do you have about what mom-to-be might like? \_\_\_\_\_

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**ACTIVITY** What are other things you can cook for her? \_\_\_\_\_

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# What if My Baby's Mother & I Aren't Together?



Even if you and your baby's mother are no longer in a romantic relationship, you will still be connected throughout your child's life. There are things you can do to support your child and your child's mother, even if you aren't together.

1. One of the greatest ways to show support is to attend prenatal visits with the mom. If that's not possible, ask about the visit and keep it about the baby.

- How do you like your doctor?
- How did the visit go?
- How is the baby progressing?
- When is your next visit?
- Are you getting a sonogram?
- Is there anything that I can help with?

2. Become educated about the stages of development and track progress of the baby on your own. Even though you and Mom may not be romantically involved, it doesn't mean that you should remove yourself from the process.

3. Get things for the baby's arrival. This might be as simple as asking the mom what she needs for the baby, researching car seats or throwing your own baby shower. Whatever the situation, you can show your support by making sure your child will not go without.

4. Be sympathetic to the changes that being pregnant brings. Keep in mind that moms must immediately change their behavior when they find out they are pregnant; that is not true for fathers. When you talk to the mother about her pregnancy, keep in mind she probably doesn't want to hear about the great time you had at the party last week or the fun you are having hanging out with friends.

5. Encourage healthy lifestyle changes by making those same changes for yourself. We know how risky behavior might impact healthy baby growth. Be supportive and understanding that those changes might be difficult to make.

The best way to support Mom is to make the healthy change too. This will show that you care and support the healthy development of baby and share in the sacrifices that it brings.

**ACTIVITY** What else can you do to show Mom you want to be in your child's life? \_\_\_\_\_

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**ACTIVITY** What are you willing to do to be connected to the new baby? \_\_\_\_\_

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**ACTIVITY** What are you not willing to do? \_\_\_\_\_

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# What You Can Expect When the Baby Comes



## **Newborn Babies can...SEE!**

Many people still think that when babies are first born they can't see. Not true! They can see things that are 8-10 inches from their eyes (about the distance to Mom or Dad's face when they are holding them). When they're three months old they'll be able to see really well. What's their favorite thing to look at? YOU! But be careful! Bright lights can bother a baby's eyes. Newborns won't be ready to be on stage for a while.

## **Newborn Babies are...CURIOUS!**

They like to look at things that are close...especially things that move.

## **Newborn Babies can...HEAR!**

A newborn has very good hearing. As soon as they're born they can turn toward a sound to see where it comes from. They will react to loud or sudden noises and even cry to let you know they're scared. Newborns can start to tell your voice apart from other people's if you talk to them a lot. The more babies hear your voice, the more they learn about you...and how to talk. Babies like smooth, soft sounds. When your baby is born keep him away from loud music!

## **Newborn Babies can...FEEL!**

Babies love to be held close enough to feel your warmth and heartbeat. Do it a lot starting as soon as he's born, but always hold onto the baby's head when you hold him. ***Holding your baby will not spoil him!***

## **Newborn Babies can...DO THINGS!**

Newborns will grab anything you put in their hands. They don't even think about it. Their grasp is stronger as a newborn than it is later on. He will also try to grasp things with his feet! He won't be able to hold his head up, but he'll sure be trying!

## **Newborn Babies can...THINK!**

Okay, they don't think in words, but those little brains will soak up the world around them like a sponge! And they'll start to make sense out of it really fast. Your baby won't take long before he starts to connect things together. He might figure out that Mom means food, especially if she breast-feeds. As a dad, you might make your baby think of fun. It's no wonder he'll react to you and Mom in different ways. He will also recognize faces and sometimes imitate them. At this early stage your baby will be figuring out what different things look like. He will really like round things better than things with straight lines and black-and-white things better than colored things.

## **Bonding With Your New Baby!**



### **I Need a Clue:**

### **Bonding...you mean like Super Glue?**

Even better. Bonding is the feeling of closeness that you and your baby share with each other.

### **“Will My Baby Love Me?”**

For about the first 4-6 weeks after your baby is born, she probably won't give you many signs that you're doing a good job as a dad. In fact, she may seem to just sleep, eat, wet and cry all the time. This can make you feel like your baby doesn't love you. Then what happens? You could back off and stop showing that you love her. Something like that can go round and round and keep getting worse. You have to stop it. Bonding will help you and your baby.

### **“How do I go about bonding?”**

One of the best ways to bond is to make some special time you can spend with your baby in the hospital or as soon after birth as possible.



Smile at him, look into his eyes, and talk to him. The earlier you start being with your baby and doing things with him the more bonded you will both feel. You will learn the things he does that show you what he wants. Does he want to be picked up, played with, or just rocked to sleep? As time goes by your baby will learn that he can count on you. This will give him a feeling of safety and help him feel good about himself. Bonding doesn't happen all at once. There's nothing wrong with you if you don't seem to hit it off with your baby right away. Don't worry. Pretty soon he will win your heart, and you will win his. Here are some fun ideas you'll be able to use to start bonding with your baby:

- **THE STARING CONTEST.** Stare at your baby. See who will blink first. Think you'll win? Think again. Babies love to stare at people. You'll have a battle on your hands!
- **PLAY KANGAROO!** Strap on a baby carrier, pop the baby in, and go on about your business. Rake leaves, wash the car, play with the dog. Your kid will love every minute.
- **READ THE SPORTS PAGE OUT LOUD!** Your baby will love to listen to you, but she won't have a clue what you're saying. So read stuff YOU LIKE. She won't mind. Read the sports page, the want ads, the TV listings. To her it's a nursery rhyme.
- **SHOW HER HOW YOU FEEL!** Let your baby feel your whiskers, your moustache, your hands. They all have different feels to them that she will get a real kick out of.

### **“They Won't Let Me Near My Kid!”**

After the baby comes home, you might feel like no one is giving you a chance to bond with your baby. Other people might seem to be taking care of everything because they think dads don't want to be involved...or don't know what to do. Some people think that a dad's job doesn't start until his child is in school. WRONG! If Dad doesn't start bonding when his child is a baby, it's harder when the child grows up. You can still do it, but it's tougher.

**ACTIVITY**

**Are there things that could happen or people who might get in the way of bonding with your baby?** What might you say to help them understand your desire to bond with your baby and be involved from the very beginning? \_\_\_\_\_

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**“What can I do to make this bonding thing happen?”**

Lots of things. Burp your baby. Change her diapers. Cuddle her. Give her a bath. Rock her to sleep. Get up in the night with her. Talk to her. Walk her when she cries or is fussy. Support mom while she is breast-feeding. These are things you can't overdo. More is better. ***You can't spoil your baby at this age, so stick with it.*** Show people you can do it. When someone starts to change her diaper, say, ***“I'm her dad. She likes me to do it.”***

**“What is the most important gift I can give my baby?”**

Is it money for nice clothes and toys? Is it nice, clean diapers to replace the dirty ones? Is it being quiet when he sleeps? There are lots of answers...but they all add up to one thing: **TRUST!** The most important gift you can give your baby is to teach him how to trust,...to know that you will be there for him when he needs you...that ***he can depend on you.***

**“Why is trust so important?”**

Because babies who **don't** learn to trust will grow up: Not feeling safe. Not feeling good or confident about themselves. Not believing that others (like you) love them. Not knowing how to care about others (like you). Not trusting other people. Not thinking they are important. Not respecting others.

How you act with your baby and care for him can affect: How his brain grows. How he feels about himself and the world around him. How he feels about you and others for the rest of his life. His ability to trust.

### **“How can I teach my baby to trust?”**

She will learn to trust when she knows you will be there to comfort her when she cries. Feed her when she’s hungry. Play with her when she’s bored. Change her diaper when it’s wet...or dirty. Hold her when she’s lonely.

Trying to figure out what your baby needs and being there to help lets your baby know **she can depend on you** and **trust you**. She needs these things to grow up healthy, happy and smart. A lot of guys never take care of babies until they become dads. Many men don’t like to do things they don’t know much about because they don’t want to look stupid. Learning how to take care of your baby before she’s born will help you feel more comfortable in your new job as Dad.

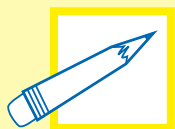
## **Changing a Diaper!**



For many dads, the thought of changing a diaper is GROSS! They don’t think they know how to do it and don’t want to learn. Diapering is easy. If Mom can do it, you can. In fact, you can learn to do anything Mom can do, you may just do it differently. Diapering is not a “girl thing”; it’s a “parent thing.” In time you will probably even work out your own special way of doing it. Then you can proudly say, **“Nobody diapers like Dad!”**

### **“Why would I want to change a diaper?”**

Once you get the hang of diapering you can relax and enjoy the time. It’s a chance to make that Dad-baby connection. In other words... it’s a chance to bond. Many babies like to be diapered. It’s a time of relief for them, and it can be a great chance to get to know each other. Plus, diapering will be a good time for all that fun tickling, tummy kissing, toe tweaking, and “This little piggy went to market” ...ing.



### **New Dad Tip:**

The truth is, not every baby likes to be diapered, and not every baby likes it every time. No problem. Dad can handle it. Always have your “toys-and-things-to-look-at” stash handy. You can also

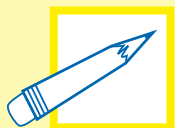
hang a mobile nearby for your baby to “oooh” and “aaaah” at.

### **“How often do I change a diaper?”**

Your baby should be changed right after his diaper gets very wet or when he has pooped. This is the best way to keep him from getting diaper rash.

### **“How do I do it?”**

Gently lay your baby on a flat surface, like a changing table or bed. Always keep one hand on the baby. Those little squirmers can roll off in the blink of an eye! Take off the old diaper by pulling the adhesive tape tabs loose. Lift your baby by the feet and pull out the diaper. Next, roll it up and put it in the trash. Wipe off any “leftovers” with a baby wipe or wash cloth. Don’t just wipe the easy parts. Get her clean all over. Then place her on a clean diaper. Make sure your baby is lying on the back of the diaper (yes, there is a back and front). Cover her with the front of it, pull the adhesive tape tabs and fasten the diaper. Keep in mind: TOO LOOSE, THEY LEAK! TOO TIGHT, THEY SHRIEK!! Leave enough room to slide at least two fingers inside the diaper at the waist. That’s it! Then go wash your hands.



### **New Dad Tip:**

Don’t throw ordinary baby wipes into the toilet. They can clog it! Throw them into the baby’s diaper trash or make sure you buy flushable wipes.

# Sleeping, Dressing, Grooming



## Sleeping

During the first few months, your baby will sleep between 15 and 20 hours a day. Now is the time to start planning for a safe, quiet place for your baby to sleep.

IMPORTANT STUFF about putting baby to bed:

- Never lay a baby on a pillow, a soft couch, an adult bed or a waterbed. Don't put toys, comforters, blankets or pillows in the crib when your baby is sleeping. You need to follow these rules to make sure your baby doesn't suffocate.



### **I Need a Clue: Suffer-what?**

Suffocate. It means that his air gets cut off because something is covering his face. He could die from it, so **BE CAREFUL!**

- Always put your baby on his back when he's sleeping...not on his stomach or side. If you just think to yourself, "Back...to sleep" you'll get it right. Or try, "On his back in the sack." Make one up that works for you. Babies who sleep on their back are less likely to die of SIDS.



### **I Need A Clue: "What's SIDS?"**

It stands for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Sometimes babies die all of a sudden, and the doctors don't know why. There could be a lot of reasons. Babies who sleep on their stomachs face an increased risk for SIDS.

## Dressing

You will want to undress and re-dress your baby a little at a time so that he never has to be naked and get too cold. You can put a towel or light blanket over the baby's bare tummy. It will help him feel safe and calm.

## Grooming

All newborns have peeling, flaky skin. This is normal. Don't use lotion or oils on your baby to stop this. Fingernails need to be kept short. Although it can be time-consuming, using a nail file or emery board is the safest method to shorten and smooth the nails. An alternative is to trim nails carefully with baby nail clippers or baby nail scissors that have blunt rounded tips. (Do NOT use adult-sized nail clippers – you may accidentally clip the tip of the baby's finger or toe instead of the nail.)

Don't put anything in the ears or nose. These places will take care of themselves. Just wipe around the outside. **Never use Q-tips or cotton swabs.** They can poke and do damage.

## Feeding



### “Is breast-feeding healthier than formula?”

Absolutely! Every mother makes milk that is custom designed – specifically for her baby. A mother's milk is loaded with live ingredients that protect her baby from the illnesses and infections he is exposed to, including ear infections, upset stomach and respiratory infections. This means much fewer trips to the doctor and more money left in your pocket.

Breast-fed babies are also less likely to die of SIDS or develop diabetes, obesity, asthma and certain types of cancer as they grow older. Breast-fed babies tend to be smarter, too!

Not only is breast-feeding healthier for the baby, it's better for Mom. Breast-feeding burns 700 calories a day, so mothers have an easier time maintaining a healthy weight; and mothers who breast-feed have a reduced risk of type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and breast and ovarian cancers later in life.



### **New Dad Tip:**

If Mom is breast-feeding and taking the baby to daycare for the first time, tell her to get down on the floor to play with the toys and hug the other children. Her milk will then make antibodies to protect the baby from the bacteria in the daycare.

### **“I’m the guy. What does breast-feeding have to do with me?”**

Good question. Breast-feeding is pretty much Mom’s business, right? Not exactly. Breast-feeding takes a lot of mom’s time. Since babies eat 8-12 times in a 24-hour period, she will spend much of her time feeding and taking care of the baby. Moms often have a hard time balancing these new needs for their time with the demands of running a household. This is where Dad comes in. Pitch in to help get it all done! Do some house cleaning. Do the laundry. Make Mom some healthy meals and remember, no alcohol. You can take pride in knowing that because you support mom during breast-feeding, your baby’s health, growth and development is off to the very best start.

### **“How do I feed the baby?”**

Feeding is another chance to bond with your baby and make him feel good about himself.

### **Breast-feeding**

Once the mother’s milk supply is well established (usually by 4-6 weeks), you can have special time feeding your baby a bottle of expressed milk while your partner takes some time for herself. Find a comfortable place where you can relax, hold him in your arms and look into his eyes. Be sure to hold your baby when you feed him. Always hold the bottle, too. Don’t prop the bottle up. That could make him choke and have more ear infections.

### **Formula Feeding**

Formula-fed babies should be offered about 2 ounces of formula every 2-3 hours through the first six months of life. More formula should be prepared and offered if the infant still seems hungry, especially as the infant grows. Newborns may take smaller, more frequent feedings. Your baby does not need any extra vitamins or foods. Babies should not be given cow’s milk, Kool-Aid, soft drinks, tea, fruit juices, etc.

If you want to warm the bottle, hold the bottle under warm (not hot) running water right before feeding. Always test the formula by dripping some on the inside of your wrist to be sure it's not too hot. Do not use a microwave oven to warm the bottle. Never place anything in your baby's bottle other than breast milk or formula. Do not add baby cereal or other thickeners unless your child has special medical needs and your baby's doctor recommends it. Test your bottle nipples from time to time to make sure the right amount of formula is coming out. It should come out in drops, and not make a stream.

### **After Feeding**

Burp your baby at a natural break or at the end of a feeding by gently rubbing his back while supporting him in an upright position. If there's any formula or breast milk left over in the bottle after feeding your baby, throw it out. The germs from your baby's mouth will get into the milk in the bottle and could make your baby sick if you feed him that same milk later.

After feedings, change the diaper, then let the baby nap on your bare chest. Babies love skin-to-skin contact with their dads and hearing Dad's deep rumbling voice. This is a great way for babies to bond with their dads.

### **“Can Mom Work and Breast-feed?”**

There are MANY social challenges for moms who breast-feed. However, most moms are protected under new federal law that requires employers to provide reasonable break time and a private non-bathroom place to express milk during the work day. Families can find out more about combining work and breast-feeding as well as other issues related to breast-feeding at [breastmilkcounts.com](http://breastmilkcounts.com).

### **“When does my baby need other foods?”**

Your baby should have only breast milk or formula until he is at least six months old. No juice, tea, Kool-Aid, cow's milk or any solid foods, including cereal.





**CRYING IS NORMAL!** Most babies cry for about two hours a day and many get fussy toward the end of the day.

**CRYING IS IMPORTANT.** It's the only way a newborn can tell you he's uncomfortable and wants help. Are you ready for this?

**NOBODY CAN MAKE A BABY STOP CRYING.** Not moms, not dads, not doctors, not baby experts...**NOBODY.** Babies stop crying when they are ready. So relax. It's not Dad's job to make him stop. Dad's job is to show him that he lives in a terrific world full of people who care about what he needs. If you stay cool and treat him with care when he cries, he starts to learn how to communicate. The bond between you gets stronger. He starts to feel good about himself and his world. The more Dad responds calmly to his crying baby, the stronger the bond gets between Dad and baby. The stronger the bond, the smarter, healthier and stronger the baby becomes.

### **“So what should I do when the baby cries?”**

When your baby cries, but you know that he has been changed, fed and burped, here are some things to try: Wait one minute before doing anything. Lean over him without picking him up and talk softly to him. Stroke his head as you count slowly out loud “1,001. . 1,002. . .1,003. . .1,004. . .1,005. . .” Lift his hand to his mouth so he can suck on his fingers. Pick him up in your arms and hold him. Try giving him a pacifier. Rock him in your arms or walk with him against your shoulder. Walk outdoors with him.

**MIX TOGETHER WAYS TO DEAL WITH CRYING.** Try mixing sounds, movements, touch and things for him to look at. For example: Hold your baby and rub his back while you're walking around...and maybe even sing to him.

**INVENT A NEW WAY.** The same thing doesn't always work every time or for every person. Don't just use somebody else's ideas. Try your own. If it doesn't work after about five minutes, try something else or add something to what you're doing. And keep trying!

**DON'T BE EMBARRASSED.** Sometimes you might think what you're doing to calm the baby looks a little silly for a guy to do...especially with other people around. Don't cave in! Take pride in knowing that others will really respect you (even if they don't say so) when they see you can stay cool when you've got a crying baby on your hands.

**DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU'RE NOT A GOOD DAD.** If you've done all you can do and just can't handle the baby's crying anymore, take a break! It's OK! Be proud that you did your best. Remember, every time you treat your baby calmly and lovingly you learn new things about what works and what doesn't.

**STAY COOL.** A baby's cry is one of nature's loudest sounds. It is as loud as a truck without a muffler—that's almost enough to be painful! Sometimes this can really get to you. A crying baby can make anybody feel frustrated...and sometimes angry. A pat can become a slap; a firm hold can become a squeeze; a rock can become a vicious bounce.

**BEFORE THIS HAPPENS:** Stop what you're doing. Put your baby down in a safe place. Get some help. Take some deep breaths, be calm and know that you did your best.

Babies cry for lots of different reasons. Always remember, it's more important to show your baby how much you love her and want to help her than to figure out exactly what's making her cry. If you've done everything you know to do, and the baby is still crying, you may have to let her cry herself to sleep. That's OK. Sometimes babies don't even know why they are crying.

**ACTIVITY** What are some things you could do if your baby cries for a long time? \_\_\_\_\_

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## CRY CHART

Try This...	If Yes...	Do This...
Wet/dirty diaper? No ↓	Yes →	Change diaper
Time to eat? No ↓	Yes →	Feed your baby
Uncomfortable? No ↓	Yes →	Pick her up and move her around. Check if hot or chilly. Adjust clothing. Check for diaper rash.
Gas bubble? No ↓	Yes →	Hold your baby to your shoulder. Walk around, gently stroking her back until she burps.
Bored or angry? Wants to be held? No ↓	Yes →	Hold, hug, cuddle, kiss, tell stories, read, sing, show baby interesting pictures, go for a walk. Tell her you love her.
Tired? No ↓	Yes →	Gently rock your baby, telling her how much you love her or sing her lullabies until she falls asleep.
Colic? No ↓	Yes →	Lie down and let your baby fall asleep lying on your chest. Be sure and hold her gently.
Sick? No ↓	Yes →	Check for fever. What are the symptoms? Call doctor.
Something unusual. Schedule change? No ↓	Yes →	Hold, cuddle, gently talk to your baby.
Teething? Change in eating? Constipated? Unusual poop? No ↓	Yes →	Let her know you will take care of her.
<b>Nothing is working!</b>	<b>Sometimes your baby needs to cry. It s OK. You can show your love anyway.</b>	

## Never Shake a Baby



Sometimes people get so freaked out over a baby who won't stop crying that the only thing they can think to do is shake him. Does that make sense to you?

Check this out: Shaking scares babies. Shaking hurts babies. Shaking makes babies cry. There is no way shaking a baby will ever make him stop crying. He will only cry harder. **SHAKING THE BABY DOES NOT WORK!...and it's REALLY DANGEROUS!** Babies' necks are weak and their heads are heavy. Shaking a baby is like getting a whiplash in a car wreck. It will hurt his brain and spine. You might not even notice how bad it is for a long time. Doctors call it Shaken Baby Syndrome, and it is a form of child abuse. Shaking a baby can cause bleeding in the brain, blindness, hearing loss, seizures, spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy AND EVEN DEATH! Never shake a baby! Tell anyone who might babysit your baby about how bad Shaken Baby Syndrome is. If you know your baby has been shaken...or even if you think he may have been...take him to the Emergency Room or call 911. If you believe that your child has been subjected to any abuse, report it by calling (800) 252-5400 if you live in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas or New Mexico.

## Newborn Safety



### **Never leave a baby alone in a car...not even for a minute!**

You're in a hurry. You just need to go into the store for a second, so you leave the baby in the car. What happens if you can't find what you need? What happens if the checkout line is longer than you thought? She'll be OK, right? Wrong! Here's what can happen: Even in mild weather, if the windows are up it can get hot enough to hurt your baby's brain...permanently!

Someone could steal your car...and your baby. If you leave the engine running, the baby could climb out of the car seat and bump the car into gear by accident. The baby could hit power controls and get stuck in moving seats or windows. Engine fumes could make her sick or kill her. It might be easier to leave a baby in the car...but it's not very smart. **TAKE HER WITH YOU!**

### **Keep your baby protected from pets.**

Sometimes pets get jealous of new babies and can bite them.

### **Giving your baby a bath.**

Be sure your baby's bath water is warm, but NEVER hot!

### **Holding a newborn baby.**

When you hold your baby (which you should do a lot) always remember to support his neck and head!

## **All About Cribs**

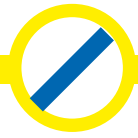


When your baby comes home, one of the most important things to have ready is a place for her to sleep. Why? Because when the baby is in bed you're doing other things (if you're lucky, you'll be sleeping, too). When you're not watching, things can happen.

### **Make your baby's crib a safe place to sleep.**

- Be sure that the bars on the crib are not more than 2 3/8 inches apart. If the space is bigger, the baby's tiny head could get caught between them.
- Make sure all joints and parts fit tightly.
- If the side of the crib can be lowered, make sure it's still at least nine inches above the mattress when it stops. Any lower and the baby could fall out. Make sure you can lock the side up or down, but that your baby can't unlock it.
- Make sure the mattress fits the crib. If you can fit two fingers between the mattress and the side, it's too small, and your baby can get stuck.
- Never paint a crib or any baby furniture with paint that has lead in it. That stuff is dangerous! Sand and repaint furniture that has peeling paint. The baby could eat it!
- If the crib is made of wood, sand off any places that could make splinters.
- Don't pick a crib with corner posts. Babies can get their clothes hung up on them and choke.

## Make Your House a Smoke-free Zone



Never let anyone smoke anything around your baby. Smoke hurts babies MORE than it hurts adults. Babies exposed to smoking are twice as likely to die of SIDS. Babies with parents who smoke get more lung problems, allergies, and ear and nose infections. Smoke can cause breathing problems in babies, which may increase the risk of SIDS (see “Need a Clue” on page 37). If you are a smoker, where will you smoke? What will you say to friends who light up in the house? Is there a place outside where you can tell them to go if they need to smoke?

## Supporting Your Baby’s Mom



Being a dad is the most important job you’ll ever have. Part of that job is being a good partner to Mom. Showing support is another important job that Dad has. When Mom comes home from the hospital she will feel exhausted! While childbirth is different for every woman, Mom’s body has been through a lot. She will feel emotionally and physically drained and will need your help to get back to normal.

### “How do I support her?”

Mom will feel better faster if you:

- Give her time to rest.
- Show her you care how she feels.
- Let her spend time with her friends.
- Enjoy playing with the baby, together with her.

Another way to show Mom support is by helping her care for your baby. You can do this by feeding your baby; diapering; bathing and grooming your baby; taking turns getting up with the baby during the night if you're living together; taking care of your baby while Mom goes out shopping or on errands.

Pay Mom some attention that is just for her. Do things like:

- Find a sitter and take Mom out to dinner and a movie.
- Make Mom's favorite meal.
- Go to a store that sells movies, let her pick any movie she wants and watch it with her. Don't laugh or make cracks about it. Just sit next to her and enjoy watching it together.
- Give her a massage and listen to how her day went. Don't add things about your day...just listen. Every day try to find small and different ways to be nice to her. You'll be surprised how quickly little things add up.
- Think of new ways you can show support – things like cooking, cleaning or running errands.

## What Are Mommy Blues?



Many moms, after having their babies, can feel depressed for a while. They may cry easily. They may not eat or sleep. They may get angry or worry over what seems like minor stuff. Many doctors feel that these changes in your partner are caused by hormones that are out of whack.



### **I Need a Clue: What are Hormones?**

They are chemicals made by our bodies that can affect lots of stuff about us: how we look, how we act, how we grow, how we feel.

A mother's hormones have been playing a tennis match for the last couple of months while she was pregnant. It will take a while for them to get back to normal. The main thing to remember is be patient! In most cases these feelings only last a few weeks. About all you can do is support your child's mother. Encourage her to get out of the house for a while and see that she's eating a healthy diet.

## Make Dadhood Legal



Guess what? If you're not married when the baby is born...you're not the legal father. You don't have any rights when it comes to your kid! "You've got to be kidding!" Afraid not. The law sees fathers in a different way than mothers. The legal system does this because it's looking out for what's best for the children. That means you have to ESTABLISH PATERNITY.



### **I Need a Clue: What does "Establish Paternity" mean?**

Simple. It means, "Doing the right thing." You can be the biological father (the guy who got Mom pregnant), but that doesn't make you the legal father. To make it legal, there are steps you have to take.

### **"How do we make it legal?"**

In Texas you can sign a form right at the hospital. It's called the AOP (Acknowledgment of Paternity). Mom has to sign it, too. You don't have to do it right away at the hospital – you'll have other chances. Before you sign it check with somebody you trust, somebody who knows this stuff – really knows – and find out all you can about how it works.

### **"Why does it matter if I establish paternity?"**

Because a lot of important things happen when a dad and his kid are "official." Here's what it does for your child: She knows her father's identity - so most importantly she knows her dad. It makes her feel better about herself. She can get Social Security, Medicare and disability benefits if something happens to you. She can inherit things from you, like a car or a house. She'll be able to get the medical history from your side of the family.



If you and Mom break up, it makes it possible for you to get custody of her. If you're not the legal father, Mom doesn't have to show you her medical or school records and doesn't even have to tell you where she is! If Mom has custody, you can get the right to visit your daughter. If you're not the legal father, it's not automatic! Whichever parent has custody (you or Mom) will be able to receive child support and medical support from the other parent.

## Getting a Job and Going to School



The more education you have, the more money you'll make to support your family.

<b>For Men With:</b>	<b>Median Monthly Income Is:</b>
<b>NO High School Diploma</b>	<b>\$1,985</b>
<b>High School Diploma or GED</b>	<b>\$2,828</b>
<b>Some College</b>	<b>\$3,354</b>
<b>College Degree</b>	<b>\$5,024</b>

### **“How do I do all this stuff...and be a dad too?”**

OK, so you need to work. Your child and your partner are counting on you to support your family. And you know it's the right thing to do. But what's the plan? If you work full-time you make more right away and build experience that can help you find jobs in the future. Even part-time work can help your family out and lead to a full-time job. Some guys may need to train or get their diploma or GED first. The good news is that there are people who can help you find a good job. There are workforce centers all around the state – there is probably one in

your town. You can get help finding job openings, creating a resume, practicing interviewing and exploring career choices. You can get more information and find out where the nearest center is over the Internet at [www.twc.state.tx.us](http://www.twc.state.tx.us). In many areas, you can call 2-1-1 to get information on the nearest workforce center. You can also find a center in the blue government pages in the phone book under “Texas Workforce Commission.” Work can take a lot of time, and it’s important to remember to make time to be with your baby, because he needs you more right now than he ever will.

## **Live Like a Dad...Be There!**



We know. You’ve heard this before...and we’ll keep saying it. BE THERE! (See, told ya). When we say, “be there,” we don’t mean “stand next to her.” We mean you need to show your kid that you’re always dependable, always ready to help, always caring. If you want your kid to grow up into somebody you can be proud of, she needs you to show her how. She needs to know there’s a guy who cares about her and thinks she’s important. That way she can learn to be proud of herself.

### **Stay Healthy**

You won’t be much help to your baby if you’re sick, drunk or on drugs. Help yourself and your kid by: eating right; getting enough sleep and exercise; staying away from alcohol and drugs. Your kid needs you to be there. Don’t let him down.

## **Leave Time for You**

Believe it or not, to be a good dad you will need to have time for yourself, doing things you enjoy that you can't do with your baby or partner. Things like watching TV, going out with your buddies, going fishing, working out or jogging. It's healthy for you to get out sometimes. You get a chance to relax and think about other things. Then you're fresh and ready to do the "baby thing" when you come back. Don't be gone too long, but regularly take some time just for you. Keep this in mind, though: partying can make people tired. Don't make your baby suffer just because you're too tired to be with him. What's more important here? There's time for friends and time for being a dad, but dadhood comes first!

## **Be a Hero**

When a dad loves his kid, something special happens inside. You get brave. You become a hero. Burning buildings, falling trees...nothing will stop you from protecting that special little person. It's natural – you don't even think about it.

Sometimes being a hero does take work. But it's GOOD WORK. To your child you're a hero when you:

- Are honest
- Control your temper
- Are dependable
- Teach him new things
- Are sober and straight
- Love him

Some of these are pretty hard jobs. Do your best. You'll show him what it means to be a hero...and you'll be the coolest, most important guy in his life. A dad who shows his child the way to a better future is a real hero!

## **MAPS FOR NEW DADS RESOURCES**

### **Parenting Two-gether**

Includes useful tips, techniques, activities and online resources regarding basic baby care, paternity establishment, responsible fatherhood and healthy relationships and marriage.

### **For Our Children: Learning to Work Together, A Co-Parenting Guide**

Explains the concept of and provides tips on how to co-parent. The guide can be used by parents who are separated or divorced, or have never been married.

### **Incarcerated Parents and Child Support**

Provides information for parents who are incarcerated or recently released from incarceration, but who want to get back on track by paying child support and being involved in their child's life.

### **Handbook for Noncustodial Parents**

Explains the Texas child support system and highlights the legal processes involved in paternity establishment and child support enforcement.

### **Child Support**

Apply online with the Office of the Attorney General's Child Support Division. Go to [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov) and click on "Child Support" or call (800) 252-8014.

### **Family Law**

Access and Visitation Hotline. Call toll-free Monday – Friday, 1 – 7 p.m., to talk with an attorney familiar with family law. Call (866) 292-4636, or visit [www.txaccess.org](http://www.txaccess.org).





ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

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