



**Congratulations! You're going to be a dad.**



Dads matter. You play a unique and very important role in prenatal care.

Dear Father-To-Be,

Finding out that you are going to be a father can be an exciting and confusing time. You may be asking yourself, "How will a baby change my life? How will I pay for all the things our baby will need? How can I be a good dad? What can I do to help during the pregnancy?" Questions like this are normal. The fact that you are wondering about these things makes you a good dad already, because you want to be involved and want what's best for your baby.

Pregnancy is seen mostly as a woman's thing because it's difficult for a father-to-be to really understand all that's involved. A dad's experience of having a baby is fairly removed from the real thing until you find yourself face-to-face with diaper changing and sleep deprivation. Relating to the minute-by-minute, close-to-the-heart, kick-in-the-gut reality of carrying a baby to term is much more challenging for a man.

## How to Share in your Partner's Pregnancy

Few women believe that their partner really understands what's involved. And the fact is, many dads-to-be don't. There are ways for you to participate and share in this journey together. Your partner will be excited to have you involved. Here are a few ideas:

### Face your fear.

If you feel a sense of raw fear about becoming a father, you're only normal. Will you be a good dad? Will your baby be born with ten fingers and ten toes? It would be weird if you weren't afraid, even a little. The best solution for this natural consequence of a life-changing experience is to talk to your partner, your dad, your friends who have gone through it before, or others you trust who can help by sharing their own experiences.

### Pay attention.

You can't be pregnant with your partner, but you can participate by being an active observer. Let your partner know you're enjoying seeing her pregnant body. Take pictures or video to record how her bump grows. Give her a back massage when she's tired. Feel the baby kick. Keep track of your baby's development with a mobile app or a weekly e-newsletter.

### Be there.

Try to make it to as many of your partner's prenatal appointments as you can. And don't miss the chance to get a glimpse of your baby during an ultrasound. Down the road, you'll want to attend prenatal classes with her, too.

### Get healthier, too.

As your partner tries to improve her diet, give up alcohol, and drink more fluids, you can support her by doing the same things. Eliminate bad-for-baby foods that might tempt her. Cut out alcohol yourself. Don't smoke, or if you do — start trying to quit. Mild to moderate exercise is also good to do together — try a walk in the park, or go for a swim.

### Love her changing body.

Understand that as your partner's pregnancy progresses, she may feel unattractive. You may also find that your relationship takes a back seat for a while. With hormone changes, back pain, morning sickness, and an understandable preoccupation with this life-changing event, your sex life may be a little less exciting for a while. Talk with your partner and ask the healthcare provider about what's safe to do during the pregnancy.

### Get ready to shop, talk, and make lots of decisions.

By the time your baby arrives, you and your partner will have bought baby clothes, prepared the nursery, bought and installed a car seat (hospitals don't let you drive baby home without one), settled on boy and girl options for your child's name and discussed decisions on breastfeeding and what kind of diapers to use. Being an active part of those conversations is one of your biggest roles throughout the pregnancy.

### Prepare to be unprepared.

The nine months of pregnancy rush by so fast (it's true!), so the experience can feel really overwhelming. Enjoy it, savor it, and don't worry if you don't have everything ready by the time your baby arrives. You'll have his or her whole life ahead of you.

## We'll be here for you, too.

We're honored to have welcomed thousands of babies in the world this year. The staff in the LMH Women's Health Center and in the Family Birth Center want to be there for both of you as a couple on your pregnancy journey. If you have questions, feel free to ask us at any point so we can be your most helpful resource. Thanks for choosing us to be part of this special event in your life ... we are thrilled to share it with you!

## A pregnancy survival guide for men

Your partner's belly is growing, baby furniture has maxed out your credit cards, and you have not had sex in weeks. Somehow pregnancy is not exactly what either of you had envisioned. Your once loving, carefree partner has become cranky and constantly nauseous. Welcome to the world of expectant fatherhood.

Any type of adjustment is stressful, preparing for a baby is an enormous change in one's lifestyle, mindset, and physical environment. If you find yourself wondering how you or your spouse will make it through the next nine months, you are not alone!

Here's a step-by-step guide on each of the trimesters of pregnancy to give you insight into your partner's upcoming physical and emotional challenges:

### **The First Trimester: Hormones, exhaustion and morning sickness**

Your partner may feel fine during the first few months of pregnancy, or she may be exhausted and need a couple of naps a day. Her hormones are hard at work, shaping the new life she carries within her. Sad movies, baby clothes, or even a minor disagreement may propel her into a crying spell. Remember that hormonal shifts are temporary and eventually your partner's moods and emotions will return to normal.

Morning sickness or queasiness affects only some women and most find that this annoying symptom disappears in 2-3 months. Unfortunately, morning sickness is a poor name for this symptom of pregnancy since many women are sick all day and night. Food odors and other smells may trigger nausea, as may eating certain foods. Some men find that the sight or sound of their partner getting sick is enough to send them running to the bathroom as well.

### **Here's what you can do ... for your partner:**

Help her find safe foods. Ask her doctor for recommendations. In general, avoid foods that upset the stomach, such as those that are fried or spicy. Some women find that crackers, ginger ale, or lemonade help. Some women find that an empty stomach causes extreme nausea. Suggest eating frequent, smaller meals. It is important to stay hydrated. Make sure she drinks plenty of water throughout the day.

Give her support. Do some research. There is a lot of information about morning sickness and how to conquer the symptoms. Ask a nutritionist, dietitian, or healthcare provider to help guide you through this time.

### **For yourself:**

Stay active. Stick to your weekly physical fitness routine and activities. Find a friend who enjoys the same sports or hobbies and get out of the house.

**Talk to a trusted friend, particularly one who is also a new dad. Or maybe even your own dad. You will be surprised that your apprehension and fear are extremely common.**



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