

A Guide for Expectant Fathers

PREGNANCY, MOTHERHOOD MALAYSIA

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Preparing for Fatherhood: A Guide for Expectant Fathers

Embarking on the journey into fatherhood is no small task as there is no instruction manual to tell you what to do and what-not to do. While typically it's the women who go through all the physical changes during pregnancy, that doesn't mean you get to be off the hook with no responsibilities until your little one arrives. Men too can be involved in the pregnancy journey to share the burdens and challenges and make it easier for your wife.

Whether you're a first-time dad or a veteran in parenthood, we've got some tips for you to guide you through the pregnancy period and beyond.

Before Your Little One's Arrival

Pregnancy can be tough on your wife, with all the hormonal changes and the growing bump. During this period, it is important to take good care of your wife so she can focus on the pregnancy. This is the time to take on more responsibilities when it comes to house chores and occasionally surprise her to take her mind off the difficult parts of pregnancy.

To bond with your unborn child, you can try talking, singing and reading to the bump. Ears are developed by around the 20th week of gestation, and at about 24 weeks, your little one can even hear sounds from outside the womb and start responding to it.¹ This will help your little one recognise your voice and add familiarity to an otherwise strange new world.

Also remember to pack your own hospital bag as labour can take a while. As labour can happen at any time, do prepare your bag in advance so you can focus on your wife when the time comes instead of scrambling to get everything ready. Pack your toiletries, some clothes, a jacket, your chargers and some entertainment for the both of you.

The Birth

The birthing process can be a painful and traumatic one for some women. It is wise to prepare yourself mentally for what may happen to avoid shock and panic, and to also be the best support for your wife². Try watching birthing videos or attend prenatal classes with your wife to learn about what to expect during labour. The more familiar you are with the process, the less squeamish you will feel during the actual delivery.

When it's time to head to the hospital, keep calm and support your wife through the contractions. During labour, provide lots of encouragement and emotional support to give them the confidence they need especially through the pain. If necessary, be the advocate for their needs to communicate with healthcare workers too.³ No matter how long labour is, do not complain!

After Childbirth

During recovery, there are many ways you can support your wife to lessen her burden. With her attention now on the needs of the new addition to the family, your wife may not remember to take care of her own needs too. So your role now is to care for her. During the busyness of it all, it is easy to forget about eating. So it's important for you to ensure she gets the proper nourishments and rest throughout

the day as it also helps the body recover after childbirth. You can cook nutritious meals for her and prepare some healthy snacks and drinks to help provide the energy she needs.

Do expect lots of crying and feeding during the first couple of weeks. It'll be a period of adjustment as you learn. It may be overwhelming and stressful during the crying, but knowing that it's normal can help you cope with the worry and anxiety.

Being a Confident Dad

The added responsibilities from being a father may be overwhelming, but know that you don't have to have everything figured out to be a good dad. Preparation and being adaptable will help you gain the confidence in being a new father. So enjoy the journey and take each phase one step at a time!

References:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/repro/noise.html>
2. <https://familyincluded.com/better-prepared-fathers-helpful-birth/>
3. <https://familyincluded.com/birth-companion-preparation/>

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