

Postpartum Fathers Should Know

PREGNANCY, MOTHERHOOD MALAYSIA

ARTICLE

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Journeying into Fatherhood: How to Support Your Wife After Childbirth

Through pregnancy and through labour, you've been the solid support your wife needs. Now that the new addition to the family is here, things can get a little different from the life you're used to. There just isn't as much support available for new dads as there is for mums to take on this new challenge, and the journey after childbirth can be a little daunting for you without an instruction manual to guide you.

Do not despair, however, as we've got you covered. Here are some things husbands can do to support his wife after delivery:

Give her time to rest

Pregnancy and labour can be exhausting. Your wife might already have a difficult time sleeping in the final lap of pregnancy with the discomfort of an expanding belly, and with the physical intensity of childbirth, it might take her weeks to recover from the fatigue. Ensure a good recovery for your wife by taking over and learn to be the sleep whisperer so that she can rest. Besides that, taking over the share of physical chores during this period can help lighten the burden for her too. You can do the

grocery runs, get the laundry done and tidy up the rooms without being asked.

Offer emotional support

Women go through a lot of hormonal changes during pregnancy, and as their body adapts to the drop in hormone levels after delivery, they might have a lot more mood swings than usual. So, do be prepared for some tears and outbursts during this time and don't take it to heart as this is not something she can control. Give her the support she needs as she navigates the postpartum 'baby blues' during this vulnerable period. The lack of sleep can affect us emotionally, so do ensure that she is given time to rest and recuperate.¹

It can get emotionally draining from the demands of caring for a little one, so make an effort to shower her with love and fill up her emotional tank so she can give her best. After all, you can't pour from an empty cup! You don't need big gestures to connect with her emotionally, even small ones like lending an ear, giving her a surprise, showing gratitude for her labour of love and even offering her a massage every now and then can help.

Take care of her needs

A mother's body has gone through a great deal of changes to accommodate the growing child, and it will take weeks to recover to get back to normal. Having nourishing meals can help aid a quicker recovery, but when your wife is juggling her new life with a new addition, meal times can sometimes be forgotten. A breastfeeding mother will need an additional of up to 400 kilocalories (kcal) per day as well.²

Do ensure she has access to nutritious meals and prepare them ahead of time so she can eat whenever she catches a break. You can also make easy to eat snacks to sustain her energy during the midnight feeds and in between meals. Even simple things like filling up her water bottle so she can stay hydrated during the day will help greatly. Take care of her, so she can focus on taking care of others.

Encourage her

Being a new mother can be overwhelming with so many new changes in life and a new person to be responsible for. Regular affirmations can help a person reframe and change their view of themselves. So give her the confidence she needs by telling her how proud you are and how she's doing a good job. Support her through the decisions she makes for your little one, and encourage her when she starts doubting herself.

Manage the visitors

We all know how excited our friends and family can be with the new addition to the family and will want to visit as soon as possible. When visitors arrive, be the one to entertain them so that your wife will not be drained. Ensure they do not overstay or come at odd hours to allow the new mum to still get her rest. When guests give any unsolicited advice, remember to provide the support your wife needs. Sometimes, hard decisions have to be made for your wife and child, and this could include disappointing your own parents and other family members by turning them away or denying their visit

Embrace your new role

There's nothing better for a mum than having a partner that's able to handle their child on their own. Embrace your new role as a dad and bond with your little one whenever you can. Hold them close to give them the comfort and security they need, take them for walks to give mum a quiet break, or entertain them in between feeds. After all, parenting is a partnership and not just the responsibility of the mother. To help shoulder the mental load more, get involved and take charge in the parental decisions for your child such as finances and insurance too.

References:

1. <https://familydoctor.org/recovering-from-delivery/>

2.

<https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/diet-and-micronutrients/maternal-diet.html>

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