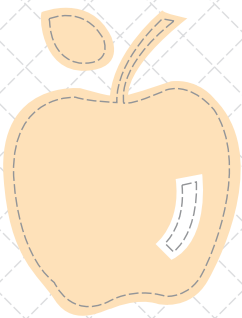
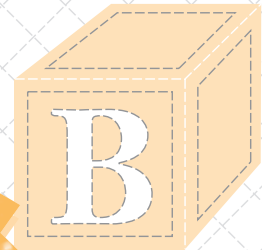
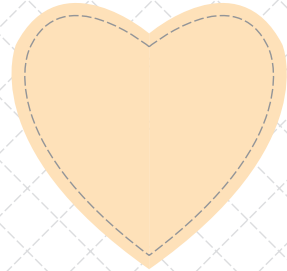
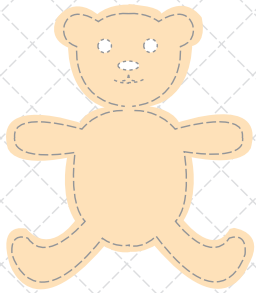


Becoming a Father

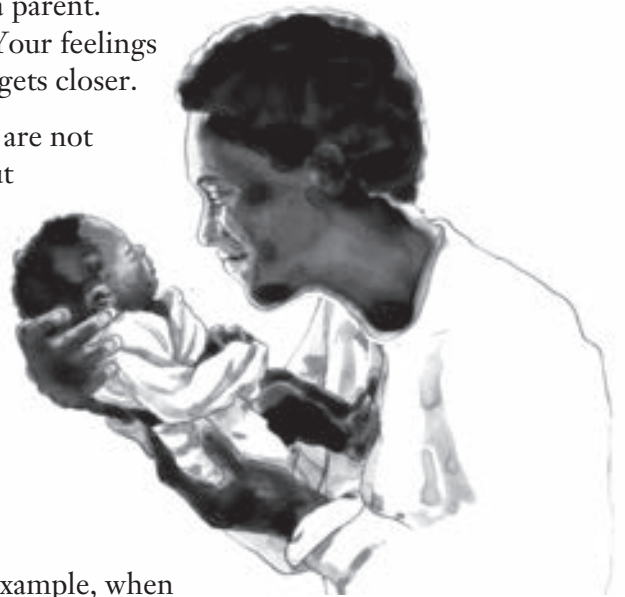


A NEW LIFE

Becoming a Father

Fathers can have many feelings about pregnancy and being a parent. You may find that your feelings are sometimes very mixed. Your feelings may also change as the pregnancy ends and the baby's birth gets closer.

It is normal to have questions about becoming a father. You are not the only man who feels this way. The things you worry about and the feelings you have may not be the same as someone else's, but they are normal.

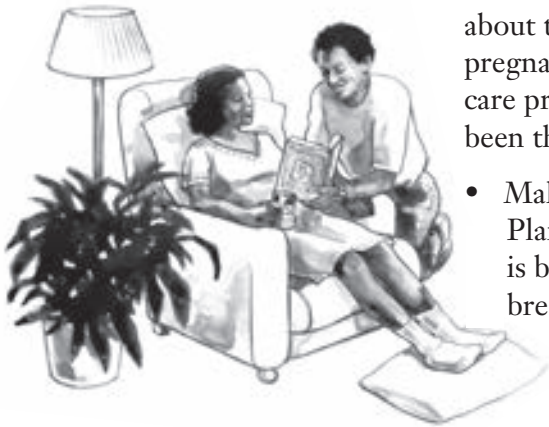


How You Might Feel

- Excited, proud, and full of hope.
- Concerned about your partner, wanting to protect her.
Is she sick? Will she be okay? What can you do to help?
- Wanting to protect the baby. Feeling love for the baby.
This may happen after the baby becomes real to you for example, when you feel the baby kicking or hear the baby's heartbeat. You may find yourself wondering about what it will be like to be a father. You may also worry about whether you will be a good father who can take care of the baby.
- Concerned about practical things.
Will there be enough money? Do you need a bigger place to live? A bigger car?
- Worried about how your life will change.
Will your relationship with your partner change? Will your partner focus so much on the baby that she won't have time for you? Will she love the baby more than she loves you? Are you selfish for even thinking about this?
- Concerned about sex.
Will having sex hurt your partner or the baby? Is it okay to still want sex?
Is it okay not to want it?

What You Can Do

- Talk about how you feel. Your partner is the best person to talk to. Share your joy and excitement as well as your worry and concern. Listen when your partner talks about her feelings. Talk about the kind of father you hope to be.
- Read and learn about pregnancy and birth. This prenatal book can help you and your partner. Section 1 - Healthy Start, talks about sexuality and communication. It provides advice on buying safe furniture for your baby. Section 2 - Nine Months of Changes, gives details about the baby's growth and changes during each month your partner is pregnant. You might go with your partner to one of her visits to the health care provider. Meet the health care provider. Ask the questions that you have been thinking about. Listen to your baby's heartbeat.
- Make plans together. Plan for the birth. Talk about how you will feed the baby. Breastfeeding is best, and your partner needs to know you will support her to breastfeed. There are many benefits to breastfeeding. See Section 4 - Breastfeeding, for more details. Talk about how you will divide the work, responsibility, and fun of a new baby.



Abuse in Pregnancy

Violence against women is a common problem. Abuse often starts or gets worse when a woman is pregnant. If a woman is abused when she is pregnant, she is four times more likely to have a baby who does not weigh enough (low birth-weight baby).

The stress of pregnancy can lead to abuse. Women who are abused are three times more likely to be injured when they are pregnant. They may also have a miscarriage.

Questions you need to ask yourself:

- Is she afraid of me?
- Do I threaten her?
- Do I yell at her?
- Do I call her names?
- Do I throw things?
- Do I hit her?
- When I get angry, do I put all the blame on her?
- When I hit her, do I promise not to do it again?
- Does she feel she is alone and has to keep the abuse a secret?

If you said YES to any of these questions, you should talk to someone because your partner and your unborn baby may be in DANGER.

How can you help to prevent abuse?

- Learn to talk openly about your feelings with your partner. How is your relationship changing now that she is pregnant? What can you do about this?
- Find out who you can talk to in your community. It is important that you talk to someone about the new feelings you have.
- Get help right away if you think that abuse is part of your relationship.

You, your partner, and your unborn baby deserve a safe start in life!

Stop the hurting, start the healing.

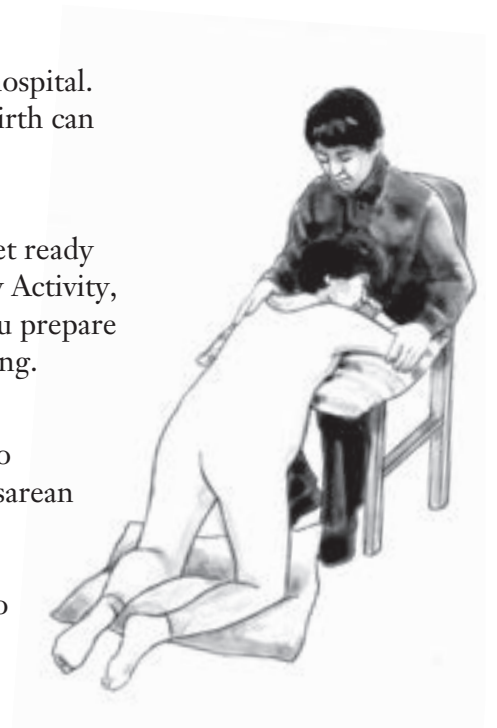
How You Might Feel

- Excited that the baby will be born, at last!
- Worried that you will not get to the hospital in time. Worried that something bad will happen to your partner or baby.
- Overwhelmed that it is all happening so fast.
- Confused about what is going on, and what you should be doing.
- Hoping that you will be able to help your partner cope with the pain.
- Sure that you are both ready for this experience.

What You Can Do

- Read and learn as much as you can about childbirth. Go to prenatal classes with your partner. Go on a tour of the local hospital. Watch a movie about childbirth. It will help you understand what birth can be like.
- Plan to stay with and support your partner during labour. Section 7 - Healthy Birthing, tells how you can help your partner get ready for the birth and help her when she is in labour. Section 6 - Healthy Activity, explains how you can help your partner learn to relax. The more you prepare yourself to help your partner, the better you will feel about everything.
- Talk to your partner about your worries. Sometimes fathers are so worried about the birth that they try not to think about it. You may have heard that some babies are born by cesarean section. Reading and asking questions about this may help you feel better. Talking about your worries and sharing your excitement can help you feel closer to your partner. Then, you can work together to handle all that happens.

The Father during Childbirth



The New Father

How You Might Feel

- Pleased, proud, and excited.
The birth of a baby is an amazing event. Being part of childbirth and holding your new baby are very special.
- Amazed by the baby.
You may be surprised at how strong your feelings are. You may have a very strong need to see, hold, and touch your baby. This is good for you, and for the baby!
- Sad.
Fathers sometimes worry because they do not feel as happy as they thought they would.
- Tired and overwhelmed.
Once your partner and baby come home, you may be shocked to see how much time the baby takes. You may also be surprised to see how little sleep new parents get. Sometimes a father might feel that mothers are the ones who know how to look after a baby. It comes as a surprise when your partner turns to you for support or help.
- Worried about whether the baby is normal.
Many new fathers have no idea what babies are like, or what to expect. They worry about the baby's health and about doing something that might hurt the baby.
- Worried about money.
Your family income might be lower for a while. The cost of diapers, baby clothes, and food may seem high.

What You Can Do

- Read and learn as much as you can about babies and baby care.
Section 8 - Healthy Family, talks about this, and about how new fathers can take care of themselves. While your partner is in the hospital, learn together how to give the baby a bath, feed the baby, and change diapers. Practise picking up and holding the baby before you go home. The more you know about normal newborn babies, the less you will have to worry about.
- Try to take a few days off from work to help welcome the new baby.
Learning to care for a baby is a big job. You and your partner will need each other's help and support as you learn about your baby and begin to split up the chores. Your partner will need extra help for a while as she recovers from childbirth.
- Think positively.
Babies are a big responsibility. They are also a source of joy. Being a father can fill you with pride, purpose, and joy. It really does change your life. With love and care, this will be a good change.