

SAFE kids HEALTHY kids HAPPY kids

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Parent Help Line



Don't Forget Dad!



Sometimes dads feel left out in all the excitement of pregnancy and their baby's birth. It can happen whether it is the first child or the fourth.

In many cases, mom seems to be the primary caregiver. She changes the baby's diapers, nurses him and soothes him to sleep. So, how can dad get in on the action?

Before baby arrives:

- **Go with your wife to the prenatal doctor's visits.** Look at your baby

on the ultrasound. Listen to his heartbeat.

- **Attend prenatal classes with your wife.**

Hospitals offer childbirth, breast-feeding, baby care and even parenting classes.

- **Prepare for your baby's arrival.** Go through a name book and pick out names with your spouse. Help pick out a crib, a car seat, and a stroller. Be a part of preparing for the new baby.

- **Exercise together.** Go for walks and bike rides. Practice prenatal exercises as suggested by your wife's doctor.

- **Adopt a healthy lifestyle with your wife.** Quit smoking. Cut back on junk food. Get plenty of rest. Be sensitive to your wife's need to avoid alcohol and caffeinated beverages.

After baby arrives:

- **Talk to your wife about how you feel.**

Mothers are so busy with the baby that they may be unaware of the father's feelings. Let her know that you want to actively help take care of her and the baby.

All children need and want a loving father who takes an interest in them. From the very beginning, you can be a positive force in your family's life. Take the challenge to be the very best dad you can be.

- **Feed and hold your baby as much as possible.** If your child takes bottles, be the one to give the bottle. Hold your baby "skin-to-skin." It will help soothe and calm her.

- **Help with your baby's daily care.** Give her a bath. Read her a story. Sing to her. Play baby games with her. Talk to her. Take her for a walk.

- **Plan for changes in household duties.** Look at the workload at home. Make sure your wife does not feel overburdened.

- **If possible, help your wife care for your baby at night.** You can change your baby's diapers and bring him to your wife to nurse. You can burp him, lull him to sleep and return him to his crib.

Before and after baby arrives:

- **Love your wife.** Reassure her that you love her. Cuddle with her. Give her a massage. Plan a romantic dinner. Bring her flowers. Give her hugs and kisses.

- **Research for other ideas.** A useful website for dads is the Fathers' Forum Online www.fathersforum.com, www.fathermag.com and www.dadsworld.com. These sites offer tips on how to help with your baby, your partner and even yourself.

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.

544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.