Thank you dad for taking the time to read this! Although it feels like your partner is doing so much of the work during pregnancy, you are her vital support.

We’ve put together for you some practical information for the time leading up to your bub’s arrival, and for those wonderful yet exhausting first few months afterwards.

We’ve included the latest apps you can download to help you while your partner is in labour, as well as our top tips for supporting your partner during labour and delivery. You’ve also got your own hospital bag to pack in order to make your time at the hospital a bit easier as well.

Straight after bub arrives there are some great ways for you to get involved. We’ve given you a head to toe care guide for your newborn, and provided you with a guideline as to what to expect with your little one’s sleep schedule as well. We’ve also included simple ways that you can support your partner as they adjust to motherhood.

If you’re finding fatherhood overwhelming you aren’t alone. We’ve included lots of places that you can contact if you need to chat to someone else about how you’re travelling during the journey of fatherhood.
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Dad’s Hospital Bag

Depending on how everything pans out, you might know with certainty when your bub is due. Or, it might be a waiting game with you watching your partner to see if every twinge is the sign that bub is on the way.

The thing is, your partner will definitely have a bag packed for themselves and for bub, but you should have one as well. Try and have it packed up well before the big day, then you can stash it away to grab as you head out the door to the hospital. It’s not a good idea to keep a lady in labour waiting while you pack your bag.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRING</th>
<th>REASON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A change of clothes</td>
<td>You may have a long day (or night ahead of you) and may not have time to dash home to freshen up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toothpaste and toothbrush</td>
<td>After a long night, it’s good to be able to face the day with clean teeth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lip balm</td>
<td>Hospitals can dry your lips out, and it’s nice to have soft ones for kissing your partner and newborn bub.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacks for you</td>
<td>A couple of protein bars and a water bottle will ensure you can keep your energy levels up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacks for your partner</td>
<td>It’s a thoughtful way to show your partner that you care. You can bring them out when you’re back in the ward and help her get her energy levels back up. After all, she’s just completed the equivalent of a marathon!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books/magazines</td>
<td>You may find yourself waiting around quite a lot, so have something to occupy yourself. However, it is sensible to save the reading for the moments when your partner is not in active labour. By then, it will be all hands on deck!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car seat</td>
<td>Obviously, this isn’t going in your bag, but you really need to have this securely set up in the car well in advance of bub arriving.</td>
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</table>

**On the day**

| Phone                        | You’ll need this for letting everyone know about bub’s arrival. |
| Camera and charger           | Have this all set to go, and make sure the memory card is a new one so you can take lots and lots of photos. |
Top 5 Tips For Helping Your Partner Through Labour

One of the hardest things is watching your partner in pain and being unsure how to help. Here are our five top tips for being able to support your partner:

Learn how to time contractions.
Check that your watch has a second hand that is easy for you to read and have a note pad on stand by. Alternatively you can download this app to do it for you! You need to time your partner’s contractions from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next. Early labor is usually when they’re eight to 10 minutes apart and last 30 to 45 seconds each. You usually head to the hospital when the contractions are less than five minutes apart, last a minute or more, and continue on in that pattern for an hour. However, keep in touch with your hospital and midwife and do what they advise.

Help between the contraction breaks.
During the breaks between contractions you can offer practical support by offering your partner a glass of water, or holding them as they stretch their legs and prepare for the next wave to start. Remind them they are getting closer and that it will end.

Reassure your partner to feel comfortable about giving birth.
Giving birth can be a messy affair. Have cool flannels on standby to help gently wipe their head and arms when they need it. Get in the shower with them when they want water, and remember you have a change of clothes anyway for later on.

Support their pain relief choices.
It’s likely your partner will have explored their options for pain relief, but be prepared to be flexible on this. You might have drawn up a birth plan together, but be prepared to change if that’s what the circumstances dictate. You may have to be the advocate for your partner and speak on their behalf to midwives and doctors. Make sure you work as a team.

Help them with pushing and panting
There will come points during your labour where your partner will have an urge either to stop pushing, or to push when the midwives don’t want them to. Listen to the midwives and support your partner. You may need to join in the panting with them, so they stop pushing until the midwives say they can start. By doing so you can help them avoid unnecessary tearing or discomfort.
The First Hour of Fatherhood

You’re likely to be very busy as soon as bub arrives. Your bonding with bub starts almost immediately and these are some of the things you can be involved with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cutting the cord</td>
<td>It’s entirely up to you and your partner if you cut the umbilical cord. Remember it won’t be painful for bub or mum, and the midwives and doctors will ensure you can do it fairly easily. Once you’ve cut the cord, the midwife will clamp the stump near bub’s belly. This will dry up and fall off in a few days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agpar score</td>
<td>This is worth knowing about before bub arrives. It’s an evaluation performed on bub at one and five minutes after birth. It will assess your little one’s colour, heart rate, breathing, tone and response. The test is scored between one and ten. Most bub’s score at nine and ten. If there are any issues this test lets the midwife and doctor know if bub needs some extra help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding time</td>
<td>Even if your little one doesn’t want to feed straight away, you can be the one to promote skin on skin contact between mum and bub. Once they’ve been checked over, you can help your partner with their snuggle time with their little one. It’s a great way you can help with bonding together as a family unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath time</td>
<td>When bub arrives, they’re likely to be covered in a white sticky substance known as vernix. When you’re ready you can help the midwife with bathing your bub for the first time. It’s a very special time, but don’t be surprised if bub isn’t thrilled about their first bath. You can give them an extra special cuddle afterwards to reassure them everything is ok.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical support</td>
<td>It’s rare that bub needs medical intervention after they are born, but it does happen. You will sometimes have to make a tough call and leave your partner to go with bub to a neonatal intensive unit. It’s important you keep your phone with you so you can keep in contact and update your partner if this does happen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Hair:**
Your bub may be bald or have an impressive head of hair! They’ll usually get a new head of it by the time they’re 6 months old. Wash this gently about twice a week.

**Soft patch:**
Your bub will have a soft patch on the top of their skull. This where the bones are still fusing together. Treat it gently. It will close over within a year.

**Sharp nails:**
These grow fast and can cause a nasty scratch on you or bub. It’s easiest to bite them gently off yourself. Otherwise share the holding duties with your partner as you cut them off with nail clippers. It’s easier to do when bub is asleep.

**Eyes:**
It’s important to keep these clean. Wet a cotton ball with a little bit of warm water. With bub’s eyes closed, wipe the eyes gently from the inside to the outside corners. Use a different part of the cloth or a new cotton ball for each eye.

**Little body:**
Your little one has spent the past nine months snuggled up in a womb. You can become an expert swaddler to help them feel safe and secure. Ask your midwife for help on learning how to do this. It’s a great way to help calm an unsettled baby.
Your Bub’s Sleep Habits

Some bubs are great little sleepers. Others are not. There’s no “one size fits all approach” when it comes to settling management. It is useful to know what your bub’s usual sleep cycle is and the typical tired signs they exhibit. By recognizing them you will be able to implement appropriate settling measures for them.

Remember your internal biological clock determines how you move in and out of waking and sleeping during a 24 hour cycle. This rhythm takes many months to develop and newborns will often have their day and night mixed up. This, in addition to them developing regular sleep cycles, is something that will take time and patience in resolving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Typical sleep cycle</th>
<th>Signs of tiredness</th>
<th>Typical no of sleeps during day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3 months</td>
<td>• Typically sleep 16-18 hours a day&lt;br&gt;• Usually only awake 2 hours at a time</td>
<td>• closing fists&lt;br&gt;• Arching backwards&lt;br&gt;• Jerky movements&lt;br&gt;• Struggle to focus on faces</td>
<td>4 or more. These will vary in length from short naps to a couple of hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 months</td>
<td>• Sleeps for around 15-16 hours a day</td>
<td>• As before&lt;br&gt;• Will look specifically for parent’s face to seek comfort</td>
<td>2 to 3. These will usually be broken down into two shorter naps and one long one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>• 13-14 hours during a 24 hour cycle&lt;br&gt;• Broken down into 10-12 hours overnight and 2 or 3 sleeps during the day of 1-3 hours</td>
<td>• Clumsiness&lt;br&gt;• Grizzling&lt;br&gt;• Rubs eyes&lt;br&gt;• Struggles to engage with anything</td>
<td>2. This will usually consist of one short nap and one long nap in the morning or afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>• 12-14 hours during a 24 hour cycle&lt;br&gt;• Usually one day sleep of about 2 hours</td>
<td>• Impatient&lt;br&gt;• Rejects food&lt;br&gt;• Irritable&lt;br&gt;• Un-cooperative</td>
<td>1. This usually lasts for a couple of hours and takes place in the middle of the day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to Help With Bub When They Cry

1. A warm bath and then a tummy massage in a clockwise direction often helps an unsettled baby to calm down and feel more relaxed. A warm, wet washer over their tummy during bath time helps them not to feel exposed and vulnerable.

2. If your baby seems to have a tummy ache, try moving their legs in a bicycle fashion and gently bring their knees up to their chest. These movements often help with passing wind or doing a poo. Talk to your baby while you are doing this and reassure them.

3. If bub is unsettled, complete the following checklist: Are they hungry? Are they wet? Are they too hot or cold? Do they have a temperature?

4. Keep essentials like nappies, towels and a change of clothes nearby at all times. Many newborns dislike being changed, and being able to do so quickly and efficiently helps make the process less stressful for everyone.

5. Try patting bub while playing the radio slightly off the station or near a noisy fridge.

6. Make sure the room your bub sleeps in for longer naps is dark and quiet. Blackout blinds are great for this.

7. Look for your baby’s tired signs, they will let you know when they need to go to sleep. Yawning, grimacing and scrunching their face up, getting grizzly and not wanting to play are all classic signs.

8. Babies who are tired, already fed and sleepy, though still awake when they are placed into their cots, generally stay asleep for longer periods. Babies who are cuddled to sleep and then placed into their cots often wake after twenty minutes when they progress into a lighter sleep phase.

9. Make sure your baby gets plenty of natural light during daylight hours and that their room is kept dark at night. This will help them develop a day and night rhythm.

10. Slings and front-packs are a good way for parents to keep their unsettled baby close but still have their arms and hands free. Make sure your baby is strapped in well and the sling is properly attached to avoid any accidents.
Supporting Your Partner

The initial days and weeks after bub arrives can be a huge challenge to parents. Your partner will be adjusting to sleepless nights, they’ll probably still be recovering from delivering bub, and be hormonal and exhausted.

So how can you help make the transition smoother as well as coping with your new role as well?

Keep talking:
let your partner share how they’re feeling. You don’t have to offer solutions, often it will just be a release for them to have expressed their fears and worries to someone who loves them.

Help with the feeds:
whether your partner breast or bottle feeds, you can help by bringing bub to them at night feeds and then taking them back and changing their nappy afterwards. Your partner can hit the pillow early on in the evening and wake to feed before midnight and go straight back to sleep.

Pick up the shopping:
you can do the food shop and restock the fridge. Make a list with your partner before you leave the house. That way you don’t need to call home while you’re out, allowing them some precious nap time.

Be kind to her:
for a new mum who is spending ninety five percent of her time looking after a newborn, compliments can mean a great deal. Tell her how great she is with the baby or that she’s looking fabulous.

Get some help in:
if the budget stretches to it, get a cleaner in for a few weeks after bub is born. You will both be tired and it can be disheartening to cope with a messy house as well as the demands of a new baby. It is often money well spent.

Get involved:
if bub is fed, then offer to take them out for a walk in the pram while your partner catches a nap or takes a long hot shower.
Dads And Depression

Statistics suggest that up to 10 per cent of new fathers suffer from Paternal Postnatal Depression (PPND). So if you’re worried that you’re feeling low or you’re not bonding with bub the way you expected, then you aren’t alone. It might be triggered if you’re partner is suffering post natal depression or by outside factors.

The important thing is to seek help for it and know that you are not alone.

Advice for new fathers

Seek information about parenting and babies from websites and/or parenting books.

Speak to your GP or local community health centre for information and support.

Talk to family or friends with children about your experience of parenting. Maintain a healthy lifestyle and external interests. If you are experiencing changing moods, seek help early.

Find out more

Mensline 1300 78 99 78 www.menslineaus.org.au
Depression support lines:
Beyond Blue 1300 22 46 36 www.beyondblue.org.au
Panda (national) 1300 726 306
PaNDSI (Act) 02 6288 1936

Parent lines

VIC – 13 22 89
NSW – 1800 677 961
ACT – 1800 637 357
QLD – 1800 177 279
SA – 1300 346 100
TAS – 1800 808 178
WA – 1800 654 432

Websites

www.raisingchildren.net.au (includes a forum for dads)
www.dadstheword.com
www.fathersdirect.com
We really hope you have enjoyed our Huggies® Becoming a Dad eBook. You can visit our eBook library at www.huggies.com.au at anytime for many more free pregnancy, baby and parenting eBooks.

The Huggies Team