



*The new father can offer emotional and physical support to his partner as pregnancy and delivery are shared experiences!*

The importance of the support of your partner as a father cannot be understated. As pregnancy and delivery are shared experiences, the “new” father must offer as much moral, emotional and physical support as he possibly can. Indeed, many would be excited about the prospect of being a father.

### **Keep up-to-date about your pregnancy**

While you are coping with the physical demands of the pregnancy, your partner can help immensely by doing the reading and educating you. In this way, your partner will feel involved in the pregnancy.

Being well informed about various aspects of pregnancy, your partner can reassure you about the milder ailments and symptoms such as backache, leg cramps or even Braxton Hicks pains later in the pregnancy.

## See your obstetrician together

It is a lovely sight to see your partner attending the clinic with you. Encourage him to come along and ask questions about the pregnancy. If your partner has a family history of significant medical problems such as Down Syndrome or thalassemia, it is useful for him to communicate this to your doctor. More tests can then be performed to ascertain such risks in your baby.

Ask questions and be involved in the decision process such as deciding on whether to go ahead with the various Down Syndrome screening tests. Knowing the progress of the pregnancy will enable the father to understand the physical and emotional demands that you face.

Seeing your baby on the ultrasound scan together will help him feel the emotional bonding immediately. He will feel just as excited and thrilled as you.

It will be great if both of you can attend the antenatal preparation classes together. Getting to know more about the symptoms of pregnancy will help your partner understand and appreciate what you are going through. He surely will not mind massaging your calves in the middle of the night when you experience leg cramps. He will also better understand your mood swings, appetite changes and sudden cravings.

## Your partner's role during delivery

Discuss your birth plan together with your obstetrician. Your partner's presence at delivery is your best emotional support. However, be realistic if your partner has a fear of blood. (We have had to attend to several fathers who collapsed at the sight of blood!)

Ask the father to watch when the baby's head is just appearing at the vaginal opening. And very often, your partner's encouragement is the best motivation for you at this critical moment.

Most fathers love to cut the umbilical cord for the babies and we often encourage this. Indeed, this would signify the first responsibility of the new father. Armed with digital video cameras, most fathers would be the proud photographer of these precious moments of the newborn.

Birth and delivery are miraculous. Both of you must enjoy this emotional experience together!

## **The new father**

Communication and support is absolutely essential especially in the first few days after delivery. Your partner must understand the possible mood swings and postnatal “blues” that many new mothers face in the first week. You will need all the physical and emotional support that he can provide.

As a new father, he may be caught up with the various new tasks of fatherhood such as changing diapers and helping with feeds.

Be open and communicate with him about your needs. You will want to feel loved. Explore the issue of sexual intimacy and contraception as well.

Above all, becoming a new father is an incredible life experience. Savour it!

## **Did you know?**

Taking pictures of the precious moments of your baby's milestone developments will help you increase the bonding with your child. Your child will appreciate them when he/she grows up.

## **Explore more**

- Daddy, you are important
- How to communicate needs to your partner

- Things new dads need to know

By Dr TAN Thiam Chye, Dr TAN Kim Teng, Dr TAN Heng Hao, Dr TEE Chee Seng John,  
KK Women's and Children's Hospital

Sources:

The New Art and Science of Pregnancy and Childbirth, World Scientific 2008.