

*'Becoming a father is one of the most rewarding and exciting experience you could have. You have a choice to make: either you can see it as something that takes away some of your freedom and your wife's undivided attention, or you can see it as something that gives you the opportunity to live through experiences which you would never have if you did not become a parent. You can view it as something which eats a hole in your pocket, or you can view it as something that puts wealth beyond measure in your heart, because no-one else will mean to you what your children mean. While none of us is the perfect father, we nevertheless are the best father for our child'.*

*What Nobody Tells a New Father: The New Dad's Guide to Pregnancy and Parenthood*

by Alan Hosking.

Visit [www.fathersforever.net](http://www.fathersforever.net) for more inspiration.

### **A father's role in vaginal labour**

You may feel that there is not much you can do, but just being there is a huge comfort. Trust your intuition. Watching your baby being born is an overwhelming experience.

- Be loving, quiet and reassuring towards your partner.

- Be there for her when she wants you and give her space when she doesn't.
- Be positive and don't criticise.
- Offer practical help, wipe her face with a cool cloth and feed her ice cubes.
- Talk to your midwife or doctor if you are worried or don't understand what is happening.
- Keep your sense of humour.
- In the second stage of labour, help your partner get into a comfortable position.
- Talk to her and offer encouragement.
- If the midwife/doctor agrees, clamp and cut the umbilical cord yourself.
- Remember to take photos and/or a video

### **A father's role in a Caesarean**

Even an elective C-section can be worrying as it is a major operation.

- If an emergency C-section is recommended, find out why and be supportive.
- Ask if the delivery can be done under a spinal block or an epidural; this means that you can share the experience.
- During the operation, sit by your partner's head and keep reassuring her.
- Dads are still able to cut the umbilical cord; request this beforehand.
- Mom will generally be allowed to hold baby for a few minutes before baby is placed in an incubator.
- Dads are often asked to go with baby once the paediatrician has checked baby out.
- Mom will stay in theatre for at least 45 minutes to be stitched up.
- She will then be taken to the post-op ward before being taken back to her hospital room.
- Once she has regained the use of her legs, baby will be brought to her.

As a new dad, you may feel cut off from your partner. She may seem a bit distant as her body recovers from the birth and she tries to establish breast feeding. Just be there for her and

expect her to have mood swings. These 'baby blues' are temporary and should last only between 7 and 10 days.

### **A father's role with a newborn at home**

- Support your partner. Provide her with the time and space to breastfeed baby and reassure her constantly that she is doing a good job.
- Find time to help, learn how to bath baby, how to change a nappy, and how to swaddle baby
- Give your baby love
- Be aware that your partner's breasts may be tense, sore and sensitive for the first few weeks of breastfeeding
- Keep baby close for the first few weeks
- Devise a parenting support system. If baby cries when you are eating dinner take turns to look after baby
- Follow baby's routine and be willing to help. Do whatever is needed and most of all just enjoy spending time with your newborn. These days will pass by in a flash.