

A Driver's Manual for New Dads

A resource guide for taking care of
your partner and your new baby

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Welcome to Fatherhood! Gentlemen, Start Your Engines.

There are not many guys in the world who can actually say they were ready to be a father—or knew how to be one—before it happened. This manual tells you what new dads have figured out and wished they had known in the beginning about “having a baby.” By sharing what they’ve learned, we can take some of the mystery out of the process. Our new dads gave us plenty of useful thoughts and ideas. So let’s get into gear!



Becoming a parent for the first time can be filled with many emotions. Men and women don't always think alike. For many women the news of a new baby is exciting. For some men, though, it takes a little more time to warm up to the idea. It's a big change in your life. Being pregnant is very real for your partner because there's a baby growing inside her. It may be harder for you to see that anything has changed, and you may not feel connected yet to your unborn child. You might feel happy, anxious, confused, cornered—or all these things at once! Talking with your partner (who is probably as scared as you are) can make you feel a lot better. There is a little person slowly growing into someone who will look up to you, learn from you, and who will need your love and support before he or she ever even sees you. It's all pretty amazing.

Anxiety Before Getting Behind the Wheel

Before your fears go into overdrive, talk them over with your partner. Together, you can come up with ways of coping with your concerns, such as finances, housing, daycare, employment, time management, and living up to each other's expectations. The more you share your feelings and make plans, the more relaxed you both will become.



After the idea of having a baby sinks in, new dads usually start thinking about how much everything is going to cost. Doctor bills, food, clothing, cribs, diapers—it can all be overwhelming. What you are feeling is **normal**. Starting to set aside money now is a good idea, but don't worry too much about buying things for your baby because family and friends might have cribs, pack and plays, car seats and clothes they can give or lend to you. Check online want ads too; you can find great prices! Mom may get some of the things the baby needs if she has a baby shower. When buying or borrowing used baby things, make sure they work right and are clean and safe for the baby. Check the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website for safety recalls of products at www.cpsc.gov. If finances are really tight, have your partner look into the qualifications for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. This is a supplemental food program to help pregnant women and infants get the nutrition they need during the pregnancy, while breastfeeding, and during the first year of life. Call 800-522-5006 to get the name and number of the local WIC agency near you.



Okay, so you need to work. Your child and your partner are counting on you to support your family. And you know it's the right thing to do. But what's the plan? If you work full-time, you make more right away and build experience that can help you find jobs in the future. But even part-time work can help your family out and lead to a full-time job.

Benefits for Both Kids and Parents Living in Healthy Marriages

Kids

- Are healthier, both physically and mentally.
- Do better in school.
- Have fewer teen pregnancies.
- Get better jobs when they get out of school.
- Are less likely to abuse drugs.
- Have fewer run-ins with the law.

Parents

- Live longer, healthier lives.
- Make more money and have more savings at retirement than unmarried parents.

Some guys may need to get specialized training (computers, automotive, carpentry, etc.) or get their diploma or GED first. There are workforce centers all around the state—there's probably one in your town. You can get help finding job openings, creating a resume, practicing interviewing and exploring career choices. You can get more information and find out where the nearest center is over the internet at www.labor.ny.gov/career-center-locator/.

Getting Your Marriage License

So your baby is coming, and you and your baby's mother are partners in raising a healthy, happy child. Okay, so—have you been thinking about marriage? Have the two of you been talking about it since you found out she was pregnant? So what's getting in the way of getting married? What keeps you from taking that next step? Are you thinking—

- “I’m not sure I’m ready for that commitment.”
- “We don’t always see things the same way.”
- “Shouldn’t I wait until we’re always getting along?”
- “If I could just get a good job we’d have the money for a nice wedding with a ring and all that.”

Getting Your Marriage License (continued)

Some guys want everything to be just right, all worked out... everything handled and all together before they get married. ***But the truth is... marriage isn't the finish line! Life doesn't happen that way!***

Put marriage last and it won't ever happen. Marriage is about working together to get all those things you both want. What's important is that you both care about each other, you care about your kids, and you want more for yourself and them. Look around for people who seem to have marriages that work. Ask them what they think about marriage. Find out about community and faith-based organizations that help couples who are thinking about marriage. Take on the responsibility of being a husband, a DAD—a man who can be proud of himself. Check the “Benefits” box for facts to help the both of you decide.

It's not just any marriage that makes these things work out... it's a healthy marriage! Everybody has problems and arguments. But people who want the best for themselves, their partners, and their kids learn to work things out.

Establishing Paternity

If you're not married when the baby is born, you're ***not*** the legal father. You don't have any rights when it comes to your child. The law sees fathers in a different way than mothers because the legal system has to think about what's best for children, and for your child. That means you have to ***establish paternity***. That's the only way to make you the legal father of your child.

How do we make it legal?

In New York State you and the mom can sign an “Acknowledgment of Paternity,” or AOP form to establish legal paternity for your child. You can sign it right at the hospital. The AOP form is also available at your local birth registrar and your local social service agency. Before you sign an AOP, check with someone you trust, and find out all you can about how it works. Check out ***www.childsupport.ny.gov*** for more information.

If you are not sure or do not think you are the father of the child, ***do not*** sign the Acknowledgment of Paternity form. You or the person taking care of the child can start a court action to decide the issue of paternity. If this action is taken, you will have to appear in court. You do not need a lawyer for this, but you can hire one if you want.

When you appear in court, the court will order you, the mother and the child to submit to certain genetic or DNA tests. These tests are simple to take and they will tell how likely it is that you are or are not the biological father. Based on the genetic or DNA tests and other evidence, the court will decide whether or not you are legally the father of the child. If you are the **legal** father the court will issue an order establishing you as the father. This is called an order of filiation.



Why does it matter if I establish paternity?

A lot of important things happen when paternity is established.

Here's what it does for your child:

- She knows who she belongs to.
- It makes her feel better about herself.
- She'll be able to get the medical history from your side of the family.
- She can get Social Security, Medicare, and disability benefits if something happens to you.

Here's what it does for you:

- Your name can be added to the birth certificate.
- If you and Mom break up, you will have the right to file a court order for custody and/or visitation with your child.
- You will also have rights concerning adoption proceedings.

If you're **not** the legal father, Mom doesn't have to show you your child's medical or school records—she doesn't even have to tell you where she and the child are. Also, if you are not the legal father, it's not automatic that you'll get to see your child.

Baby Under Construction



Nine months. Sounds like a long time. Here's what's happening:

First Trimester (Weeks 1-13) Your baby goes from a fertilized egg to an embryo to a fetus.

By 4 weeks your baby is about the size of a grain of rice but is already starting to grow eyes, a spinal cord, lungs, and a stomach. Your baby's heart is beating, but it's on the outside of the body. By 8 weeks the fetus can move his head, arms and body. His brain and other organs are growing quickly. He has little arms but no fingers yet. By the end of the third month the baby is still only 2-3 inches long and weighs less than an ounce. He should be able to feel pain, curl his fingers and toes, suck his thumb, make faces, and even swim. By this time all the boy or girl “parts” are in place. Your doctor can tell you which it will be if you want to know.

Second Trimester (Weeks 14-27) When this stage starts, your baby will grow quickly. His heart beats twice as fast as yours. He will start punching and kicking. Put your hand on Mom's tummy—you can feel him! Soon he'll be able to hear sounds coming from outside. Your baby can also learn and remember. Start having long talks with him. The more you talk to him now, the more he will know your voice when he is born. At 24 weeks, your baby is about 14 inches long and weighs about 2 pounds. He will have fingernails and hair. His brain is growing quickly.

Third Trimester (Weeks 28-40) Around 28 weeks your baby can move in rhythm to music. When he's not dancing, he might spend a lot of time sucking his thumb. By 32 weeks your baby will react to your touch. He can also open his eyes, and recognize your voice! His organs are almost finished, but he's still growing. Pretty soon he will twist around into the head-down position and stay that way until he's born (head-down makes giving birth easier). The more you talk to the baby, play music and feel his moving around, the more it helps him grow in a healthy way!

What's Up with the Mom-to-be?

Here is a list of things that your partner might go through during the next nine months:

Physically

First Few Months: She may experience morning sickness, heartburn, headaches, tiredness and tender breasts.

Later on: She may be moody at times, crave certain foods, begin to feel the baby moving and have that “pregnant glow.”

Last Few Months: She may have more cramping, be sleepy more often, find it hard to get comfortable, walk differently and find sex uncomfortable.



Emotionally

First Few Months: She will fear that you won't find her attractive, worry about what will happen when the baby comes, worry about miscarriage, and may have decreased sex drive.

Later on: She may depend on you more, be forgetful, and be sensitive about her changing figure.

Last Few Months: She will worry about the labor and delivery, she may worry that you won't love her after the baby comes, and sometimes she may be short tempered.

After the Birth: Many moms can feel down for a while. It is called post-partum depression. They may cry easily and may not eat or sleep. They may get angry or worry over what seems like minor stuff. Your partner's hormones have been fluctuating for the last couple of months while she was pregnant. It will take a while for them to get back to normal. The main thing to remember is to be patient! In most cases these feelings only last a few weeks. About all you can do is support your partner. Encourage her to get out of the house for a while and see that she is eating a healthy diet. Do nice things for her—give her a massage, do some errands or write her a love letter.

What if You and Mom Are Not Together?

How do you get involved in your baby's life if you and Mom don't get along? Does she not want you around? Why? One thing is for sure, being a Dad takes work. But it's good work, the best you'll ever take on. Sure, the easy thing is to just back away, let her have the kid, the work and the worries. But then you wouldn't get any of the fun and laughs and love that this amazing little person is going to bring. Mom will get it all. You won't get the chance to feel the pride of watching him grow into somebody strong and healthy. Remember, this child is part of you—he's your **blood!** You're already important to him, and he's not even born yet!

Here are a few things you can do to show Mom you want to be in your child's life:

- Patch things up with Mom, at least enough so its okay for you to be around.
- Be with her when the baby is born.
- Acknowledge paternity for your child.
- Talk with her about plans for the baby's future.
- Offer to help out when she needs a break.
- Live clean.



Dads Make a Difference

You are helping to bring a baby into the world, so you have already made a difference. Being there for your baby will give her a better chance to grow up healthy, strong and smart. Not being there will make a difference because she will grow up missing out on what dads can do. What kind of difference do you want to make? When dads spend time with their kids from the very beginning and work to keep close feelings between them, good things happen to the kids, such as:

- They are more likely to be active, healthy and strong.
- They do better figuring out boy/girl roles.
- They are much less likely to be violent, anti-social, dangerous or even criminal.
- They wait longer before they start having sex.
- They are more likely to do better in school and stay in school.
- They do better at being independent, having self-control, and being leaders.
- They are more successful in life.

One way to start is by going with your partner to prenatal visits. They are very important for keeping track of how the baby is growing and whether Mom and baby are both

healthy. If there's a problem, you want to know it as soon as possible. Your partner and the baby will be examined by her OB/GYN. The doctor asks questions about how your partner is doing and checks her and the baby by feeling her tummy and checking her internally to find out how the baby is growing. He may use a special scope for this or even do a sonogram. Ask your doctor if he can give you a copy of your baby's sonogram. Seeing what he or she looks like inside Mom is amazing!



Dads Make a Difference (continued)

A national study said that the single most important thing that decides whether a woman goes to prenatal visits is the support of her partner. Try to go to *all* the visits, but if you can't make some of them, ask your partner about how they went.

There are three very short, simple reasons you should go: to be there for your baby; to support your baby's mother; and to keep from leaving yourself out of your baby's growth and development.

Prenatal visits are a great way to show your partner you care about her and the baby, and that makes things even better between you and Mom. Some good questions to ask the doctor are:

- At which hospital do you deliver babies?
- Can we visit the hospital before the baby is born and take a tour of the birthing center?
- Do you let family or coaches be there for the delivery?
- How many sonograms should Mom have?
- Do you do a lot of Cesarean deliveries and can I be there for it?

Terminology

Prenatal -	means before birth.
OB/GYN -	OB is short for Obstetrics (or care for the baby before birth). GYN is short for gynecology (female care).
Sonogram -	another word for it is "ultrasound." It's a painless test to see how the baby is doing inside Mom. It uses sound waves to draw a picture of the baby (or babies). It's also used to figure out when the baby should be born and if it's a boy or girl.
Cesarean -	Sometimes the baby can't be delivered the normal way, the doctor has to open the mother's womb and bring the baby out that way. It is also referred to as a C-section.



Whether you live with your partner or not, be there for her and help as much as you can. You could take a childbirth class together to show her you care about her. Do your best to make sure she eats healthy foods, takes walks and doesn't get stressed. Believe it or not, just being there and showing your love for the baby will help him be healthy. Do not smoke, drink or use drugs. Everybody knows these things are dangerous to the baby if Mom uses them. Well, they can be just as dangerous if **you** use them. Smoke in the air is bad for the health of both Mom and baby. Drugs and alcohol make you lose control, and that can be dangerous to everyone. Plan and set up the nursery. Get a crib and put it together if you need to. Stockpile lots of diapers in various sizes so you'll be prepared as the baby

grows. Make sure you have all the stuff you need and that it's easy to find and use. Get a car seat! Call the hospital and ask if they give car seats to newborns or if they know where you can get one. Visit your local fire department to have them check that the car seat is properly installed. Make sure you talk about how things will go when it's time to go to the hospital.

- Who will you call when she's ready to go to the hospital and when she's at the hospital?
- If you're at work, how will she get in touch with you?
- What clothes, important papers, and other items will your partner need to take with her?



What You Can Expect When the Baby Comes Home

Newborn Babies can see!

They can see things that are 8-10 inches from their eyes. Their favorite thing to look at is **you!** But be careful! Bright lights can bother a baby's eyes.

Newborn Babies are curious!

They like to look at things that move.

Newborn Babies can hear!

A newborn has very good hearing. They will react to loud or sudden noises and even cry to let you know they're scared. The more babies hear your voice, the more they learn about you and how to talk. Babies like smooth, soft sounds.

Newborn Babies can feel!

Babies love to be held close enough to feel your warmth and heartbeat. Do it a lot starting as soon as she's born, but always hold onto the baby's head when you hold her. Holding your baby will not spoil her.

Newborn Babies can do things!

They will grab anything you put in their hands. Their grasp is stronger as a newborn than it is later on.

Newborn Babies can think!

Their little brains will soak up the world around them like a sponge! Your baby won't take long before she starts to connect things together. She will also recognize faces and sometimes imitate them. She will like to play with black-and-white objects more than colorful things.

Newborn Babies can communicate!

Even though they can't use words yet babies can still tell you things. Crying can mean they are wet, hungry, tired, hurt, bored or lonely. The more time you spend with them you will begin to recognize that different noises mean different things.



Slippery When Wet

For many dads, the thought of changing a diaper is **gross!** They don't think they know how to do it and don't want to learn. Diapering is easy. If Mom can do it, you can. In fact, you can learn to do anything Mom can do; you may just do it differently. Once you get the hang of diapering, it becomes a chance to make that Dad-baby connection—it's a chance to bond, a good time for tickling and giggling.

Not every baby likes to be changed, and not every baby likes it every time. No problem. Always have your “toys-and-things-to-look-at” stash handy. Your baby should be changed right after her diaper gets very wet or when she has pooped. This is the best way to keep her from getting diaper rash. **Diaper rash hurts a lot**, especially if the diaper is wet.

Gently lay your baby on a clean flat surface, like a changing table or bed. Always keep one hand on the baby. They can roll off in the blink of an eye! Take off the old diaper by pulling the adhesive tape tabs loose. Lift your baby by the feet and pull out the diaper. Next, roll it up and put it in the trash. Don't just wipe the easy parts. Make sure you wipe little girls from the front to the back to avoid cross contamination. Then place her on a clean diaper.

Make sure your baby is lying on the back of the diaper (yes, there is a back and front). Cover her with the front of it, pull the adhesive tape tabs and fasten the diaper. Keep in mind: **Too loose, they leak! Too tight, they shriek!** Leave enough room to slide at least two fingers inside the diaper at the waist. That's it! Then go wash your hands.



Rest Stop

During the first few months, your baby will sleep between 15 and 20 hours a day. Now is the time to start planning for a safe, quiet place for your baby to sleep. Never lay a baby on a pillow, a soft couch, an adult bed or a waterbed. Don't put toys, comforters, blankets or pillows in the crib when your baby is sleeping. You need to do these things to make sure your baby doesn't suffocate. He could die from it, so ***be careful! Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) happens when babies die all of a sudden, and the doctors don't know why. There could be a lot of reasons.***

Babies who sleep on their stomachs face an increased risk for SIDS. Always put your baby on his back when he's sleeping—not on his stomach or side. Just think to yourself, “Back to Sleep.” Babies who sleep on their back are less likely to die of SIDS. If your baby is sleeping deeply, wake him gently. When your baby comes home, one of the most important things to have ready is a place for him to sleep. Why? Because when the baby is in bed, you're doing other things (if you're lucky, you'll be sleeping, too).

Regular Maintenance

You will want to undress and re-dress your baby a little at a time so that he never has to be naked and get too cold. You can put a towel or light blanket over the baby's bare tummy. It will help him feel safe and calm. All newborns have peeling, flaky skin. This is normal. Don't use lotion or oils on your baby to stop this. Fingernails need to be kept short. Use tiny, round-ended scissors and clip nails while the baby is sleeping. Don't put anything in the ears, nose or belly button. Just wipe around the outside. Never use Q-tips or cotton swabs. They can poke and do damage.

When giving your baby a bath, be sure your baby's bath water is warm, but never hot! When you hold your baby (which you should do a lot), always remember to support his neck and head!



Fueling Up

Is breastfeeding healthier than formula? Absolutely! Every mother makes milk that is custom designed, specifically for her baby. A mother's milk protects her baby from illnesses and infections. Formula doesn't! This means fewer trips to the doctor and more money left in your pocket. Breastfed babies are also less likely to die of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) or develop diabetes, obesity, and asthma as they grow older. Breastfeeding mothers tend to lose their pregnancy weight faster and have a reduced risk of osteoporosis, breast, and ovarian cancer later in life.

Breastfeeding can be a tough, tiring time for Mom. She will have to spend time feeding and taking care of the baby. This is the time a man can really help! Do some housecleaning. Do the laundry. Make Mom some healthy meals. Bring the baby to Mom for feeding. Take care of the other children. Bring Mom a healthy snack while she is feeding. After feedings, burp the baby (gently), change the diaper, and then let the baby nap on your bare chest. Babies love skin-to-skin contact with their dads and hearing Dad's deep rumbling voice. This is a great way for babies to bond with their dads.



If Mom is breastfeeding and taking the baby to daycare for the first time, tell her to get down on the floor to play with the toys and hug the other children. Her milk will then make antibodies to protect the baby from the bacteria in the daycare. Mom needs your support. Try to help her feel good about breastfeeding. Praise her and shield her from negative comments. There are lactation (breast feeding) support groups and classes that she can attend with you to learn the best techniques to breast feed. Ask the doctor or look it up on the internet.

Formula One Racing

Formula-fed babies will take about 2-4 ounces 6-8 times a day. They do not need any extra vitamins or foods. Babies should not be given cow's milk, sugary drinks, soda, tea, fruit juices, etc. If you want to warm the bottle, set it upright in a pan of hot (not boiling) water for a few minutes. Always test the formula by dripping some on your wrist to be sure it's not too hot. **Do not use a microwave oven to warm the bottle.** If there's any formula left over in the bottle after feeding your baby, throw it out. The germs from your baby's mouth will get into the milk in the bottle and could make your baby sick if you feed her that same milk later. Test your bottle nipples from time to time to make sure the right amount of formula is coming out. It should come out one drop at a time. Make feeding your special time with your baby. Find a comfortable place where you can relax, hold her in your arms and look into her eyes. Be sure to hold your baby when you feed her. Always hold the bottle, too. **Don't prop the bottle up.** That could make her choke and have more ear infections. It is another chance to bond with your baby and make her feel good about herself. Don't forget to burp the baby after every two ounces of formula or whenever the baby acts uncomfortable.

Many Moms have to return to work when the baby is still young. Some Moms find they can pump (express

breast milk) at work; others can't. Even if Mom can't pump at work, she can still continue to breastfeed the baby in the mornings, evenings, and weekends. Any amount of breastfeeding will be good for both Mom and baby and will help the baby tolerate the formula. If Mom has to return to work, she needs to start replacing one breastfeeding a day with a bottle-feeding of expressed milk or formula about two weeks before her first day of work. By the time Mom returns to work, the baby will be getting bottles during work hours and still have the closeness of breastfeeding when Mom is around. Your baby should have only breast milk or formula until she is at least four months old. No juice, tea, Kool-Aid, cow's milk or any solid foods, including cereal.



Breakdowns

Crying is normal! Most babies cry for about two hours a day and many get fussy toward the end of the day.

Crying is important. It's the only way a newborn can tell you he's uncomfortable and wants help. **No one can make a baby stop crying!** Not Moms, not Dads, not doctors, not baby experts, **nobody.** Babies stop crying when they are ready. **Stay cool** and treat him with care. When he cries he starts to learn how to communicate. The bond between you gets stronger. The more Dad responds calmly to his crying baby, the stronger the bond gets between Dad and baby. The stronger the bond, the smarter, healthier and stronger the baby becomes. When your baby cries and you know that he has been changed, fed and burped, check the box for some things to try.

The same thing doesn't always work every time or for every person. If it doesn't work after about five minutes, try something else or add something to what you're doing. Keep trying to troubleshoot, like you do when your car won't start—you check the gas, battery, starter, spark plugs and so on. As long as you calmly keep trying different approaches, you will minimize anxiety and frustration, which tends to upset babies even more. If you've done all you can do and just can't handle the baby's crying anymore, take a break! It's OK. Be proud that you did your best.

When you can't tell why your baby's crying

- Wait one minute before doing anything.
- Lean over him without picking him up and talk softly to him.
- Stroke his head as you count slowly out loud.
- Lift his hand to his mouth so he can suck on his fingers.
- Pick him up in your arms and hold him.
- Rock him in your arms or walk with him against your shoulder.
- Walk outdoors with him.



Breakdowns (continued)

Remember, every time you treat your baby calmly and lovingly, you learn new things about what works and what doesn't. A baby's cry is one of nature's loudest sounds. It is as loud as a truck without a muffler—that's almost enough to be painful! Sometimes this can really get to you. A crying baby can make anybody feel frustrated and sometimes angry. A pat can become a slap; a firm hold can become a squeeze; a rock can become a vicious bounce. **Before this happens, stop what you're doing.** Put your baby down in

a safe place. Get some help. Take some deep breaths, be calm and know that you did your best. Babies cry for lots of different reasons. Always remember, it's more important to show your baby how much you love her and want to help her than to figure out exactly what's making her cry. If you've done everything you know to do, and the baby is still crying; you may have to let her cry herself to sleep. That's OK. Sometimes babies don't even know why they are crying.

Never Shake a Baby!



Sometimes people get so freaked out over a baby who won't stop crying that the only thing they can think to do is shake him. Shaking scares babies. Shaking hurts babies. Shaking makes babies cry even more! There is no way shaking a baby will ever make him stop crying. He will only cry harder. **Shaking the baby does not work—and it's really dangerous!**

Babies' necks are weak and their heads are heavy. Shaking a baby is like getting a whiplash in a car wreck. It will hurt his brain and spine. You might not even notice how bad it is for a long time. Doctors call it Shaken Baby Syndrome, and it's very scary. Shaking a baby can cause bleeding in the brain, blindness, hearing loss, seizures, spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy **and even death!** Never shake a baby. Tell anyone that might baby-sit your baby about how bad Shaken Baby Syndrome is. **If you know your baby has been shaken, or even if you think he may have been, take him to the Emergency Room or call 911.**

Safety on the Road

Never leave a baby alone in a car, not even for a minute! You're in a hurry. You just need to go into the store for a second, so you leave the baby in the car. What happens if you can't find what you need? What happens if the checkout line is longer than you thought? He'll be OK, right? Wrong! Even in mild weather, if the windows are up it can get hot enough to damage your baby's brain—permanently! Someone could steal your car and your baby. If you leave the engine running, the baby could hit power controls and get stuck in moving seats or windows. Engine fumes could make her sick or kill him. It might be easier to leave a baby in the car, but it's not very smart. **Take your baby with you!**



Keep your baby protected from pets. Sometimes pets get jealous of new babies and may even bite them.

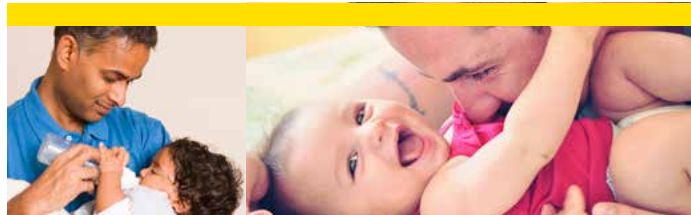
Keep small objects (coins, marbles, puzzle pieces, etc.) away from your baby until they are age 3 to prevent accidental choking.

Make your baby's crib a safe place to sleep. Check the distance between the bars on the crib to prevent the baby's head from getting stuck. Make sure all the parts fit tightly and sand any rough edges to prevent splinters. Avoid purchasing a crib with corner posts (babies can get their clothes hung up on them and choke). Never let anyone smoke anything around your baby. Smoke hurts babies MORE than it hurts adults. They are twice as likely to die of SIDS. Babies with parents who smoke get more lung problems, allergies, and ear and nose infections. Smoke can cause breathing problems in babies, which may increase the risk of SIDS. If you are a smoker, where will you smoke? What will you say to friends who light up in the house? Is there a place outside where you can tell them to go if they need to smoke? Have you thought about quitting? This would be a great time to try. **Call (866) NY-QUITS.**

You may want to take a First Aid/CPR course before your baby arrives. Learning these techniques will make you more prepared to handle an emergency. Courses are offered through many employers and various nonprofits. You can check out www.redcross.org or www.heart.org; or speak with the Human Resources department at your employer for more details.

Oh, What a Feeling!!!

Bonding is the feeling of closeness that you and your baby share with each other. “Will My Baby Love Me?” For about the first 4-6 weeks after your baby is born, she probably won’t give you many signs that you’re doing a good job as a Dad. In fact, she may seem to just sleep, eat, wet and cry all the time. This can make you feel like your baby doesn’t love you. Then what happens? You could back off and stop showing that you love her. Something like that can keep getting worse. You have to stop it. One of the best ways to bond is to make some special time you can spend with your baby in the hospital or as soon after birth as possible. Smile at her, look into her eyes, and talk to her. The earlier you start being with your baby and doing things with her the more bonded you will both feel. You will learn the things she does that show you what she wants. Does she want to be picked up, played with, or just rocked to sleep? As time goes by your baby will learn that she can count on you.



This will give her a feeling of safety and help her feel good about herself. Bonding doesn’t happen all at once. There’s nothing wrong with you if you don’t seem to hit it off with your baby right away. Don’t worry, soon she will win your heart, and you will win hers.

After the baby comes home, you might feel like no one is giving you a chance to bond with your baby. Other people may be doing everything because they think dads don’t want to be involved—or don’t know how. Many people think that a dad’s job doesn’t start until his child is in school. **Wrong!** If Dad doesn’t start bonding when his child is a baby, it’s harder when the child grows up. Feed your baby. Change his diapers. Cuddle him. Give him a bath. Rock him to sleep. Get up in the night with him. Walk him when he cries or is fussy. These are things you can’t overdo. More is better.

The most important gift you can give your baby is to teach him how to trust, to know that you will be there for him when he needs you—that he can depend on you. Babies who don’t learn to trust grow up not feeling safe, good or confident about themselves, not believing that others (like you) love them, and not knowing how to care about others.

How you act with your baby and care for her can affect how her brain develops, how she relates to others and the world around her. She will learn to trust when she knows you will be there to comfort her when she cries. Feed her when she's hungry. Play with her when she's bored. Change her diaper when it's wet. Hold her when she's lonely. She needs these things to grow up healthy,

Co-parenting

Being a Dad is the most important job you'll ever have. Part of that job is being a good partner to Mom. When Mom comes home from the hospital she will feel exhausted! While childbirth is different for every woman, Mom's body has been through a lot. She will feel emotionally and physically drained, and will need your help to get back to normal.

Another way to show Mom support is by helping her care for your baby. You can do this by feeding your baby; diapering; bathing and grooming your baby; taking turns getting up with the baby during the night if you're living together; taking care of your baby while Mom goes out shopping or on errands. Dads who support their baby's mother and get along with her, even if they don't live together, often have kids who do better in school.


happy and smart. A lot of guys never take care of babies until they become dads. Many men don't like to do things they don't know much about because they don't want to look stupid. Learning how to take care of your baby before she's born will help you feel more comfortable in your new job as Dad.

Being a good partner

- Give her time to rest.
- Show her you care how she feels.
- Let her spend time with her friends.
- Enjoy playing with the baby, together with her.
- Find a baby sitter and take Mom out to dinner and a movie.
- Make her favorite meal.
- Stream any movie she wants and watch it with her.
- Give her a massage and listen to how her day went. Don't add things about your day, just listen.
- Every day try to find small and different ways to be nice to her.



Coming to the End of the Road



You've heard this before, and we'll keep saying it. **Be there!** When we say "be there" we don't mean "stand next to her." We mean you need to show your child that you're always dependable, always ready to help, always caring.

If you want your child to grow up into somebody you can be proud of, he needs you to show him how. Your partner needs to know there's a guy who cares about her and thinks she's important. Your support once the baby arrives is what she will remember in the years ahead.

Help yourself and your child by eating right, getting enough sleep, exercise, and staying away from illicit drugs and excessive alcohol consumption. Leave time for you. Believe it or not, to be a good dad, you will need to have time for yourself, doing things you enjoy that you can't do with your baby or partner. Things like going out with your buddies, playing music or video games, working out or reading. It's healthy for you to get out sometimes. You get a chance to relax and think about other things. Then you're

fresh and ready to do the "baby thing" when you come back. Don't be gone too long, but regularly take some time just for you. There's time for friends and time for being a dad.

But remember your child needs you! Little can compare to a child's love, to your baby falling asleep in your arms, comforting a child scared by a nightmare or seeing your child's delight over knocking down a sand castle. Whatever happens along the way, a dad can always be special to his child.

Fun activities to do with your baby

- **The Staring Contest.** Stare at your baby. See who will blink first. Babies love to stare at people. You'll have a battle on your hands!
- **Play Kangaroo!** Strap on a baby carrier, pop the baby in, and go on about your business. Rake leaves, wash the car, and play with the dog. She will love every minute.
- **Read the Sports Page Out Loud!** Your baby will love to listen to you, but she won't have a clue what you're saying. So read stuff **you like**. She won't mind. Read the sports page, the want ads, and the TV listings. To her it's a nursery rhyme.

Important Things to Keep Track of:

Doctor's Name _____ Phone Number _____

Doctor's Address _____

Clinic Name & Phone Number _____

Other _____

When it's Time to Go to the Hospital:

(Fill this in **before** it's time to deliver)

Car Service/Taxi Phone Number _____

Hospital Name & Phone Number _____

Hospital Address _____

Other Important Numbers:

Day Care _____

School _____

Babysitter _____

Family/Friends _____

Other _____

What clothes, important papers, other stuff will she need to take with her to the hospital?

Prenatal Appointments:

Dates:

Times:

Other:

Cut this card and keep with you.





**Office of Temporary
and Disability Assistance**

otda.ny.gov | *childsupport.ny.gov*
888-208-4485 (TTY 866-875-9975)