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# For dads and partners - birth and beyond

## Be prepared for the birth

- make sure you can be contacted at all times
- decide how you'll get to the hospital (if you have arranged a hospital birth)
- if you're using your own car, make sure it works and has petrol
- remember to pack a bag for yourself, including snacks, a camera, and your phone or change for the telephone
- prepare a 'cascade tree' of who you will contact, and they will contact the next person, and so on

## Seeing your baby for the first time

Watching your baby coming into the world can be the most incredible experience. The midwives will ask you if you would like your baby handed to you or your partner. Hold your baby close to your body to keep it warm and safe. Many new parents experience very strong emotions; some cry, do not worry this is natural.

After the delivery you can help your partner to the shower or have a wash in bed, and get something to eat. Your partner will normally be transferred to our postnatal ward; Lady Mary ward to rest, or if the delivery was on the Rosie birth centre you will remain in your room until transfer home. If this is your second or subsequent baby you may wish to go home earlier from the labour room, you can discuss your partner's discharge from hospital with your midwife. On discharge you will be given the opportunity to discuss your birth experience with your midwife or come to Birth Afterthoughts.

## Bringing mum and baby home

You may find that relatives and friends are able to help in the early days so that the baby's mother can rest and feed the baby. This is especially necessary after a difficult birth. However, you may live far from relatives and your partner may have only you to help, so it's a good idea to have a week or so off work if you can (find out about paternity leave – if you qualify, you'll need to apply for paternity leave before the baby is due). Think about the following:

- too many visitors may exhaust the baby's mum and interfere with this special time when you are learning about being parents and becoming a family
- you could look after the baby so that the baby's mum can get a good rest each day
- take over the basic housework, but don't feel you must keep the place spotless
- try to use this time to get to know your baby – learn to change nappies and bathe your baby as well as cuddling and playing with him or her
- if your baby is breastfed, you could bring the baby's mum a snack and a drink while she's feeding. If she's bottle feeding, you could sterilise and make up the bottles and share the feeding
- be considerate about sex – it may take weeks or months before the baby's mum stops feeling sore, so think about discussing other ways of showing your love for each other until sex is comfortable

## How to help if your partner feels low

Some mothers become depressed and need a lot of extra support, both practical and emotional. Make sure you know how to spot the symptoms of postnatal depression and where to get help.

You may also get depressed. Your partner is facing the biggest changes, but that doesn't mean you should ignore your own feelings. You need support, too. Keep talking and listening to each other, talk to friends, and be patient. Life will get easier in time.

Becoming a parent, particularly for the first time, is an emotional experience. By reading all the information on these web pages, you can learn about what to do to help the mum-to-be be happier and healthier throughout her pregnancy.