

# Get your partner involved!

Let's face it, pregnancy falls generally a women's domain. After all, it's the women who does most of the physical work when it comes to growing and birthing the baby and sometimes partners can feel like they have taken a back seat and the Mumma becomes the focus. They are not suffering with morning (and afternoon and evening) sickness, they can't feel the little butterfly flutters and their body physically changing and growing, it's no wonder they may take a little longer to feel part of it all.

Don't stress, there are plenty of ways you can include your partner on the journey, so they feel part of the team!

Here are some easy ways to get him involved:

Invite him to your appointments with your health care providers is a great start. Most dads-to-be will attend the antenatal scans these days. Most employers are happy to allow them to take a bit of time off to attend midwife appointments, scans, and any other health care visits if required. If your partner can't get away from work, ask your healthcare provider if it's possible to arrange more convenient appointment times so your partner can be there with you. At some stage arrange for them to meet your lead maternity carer (LMC), this will give your partner the opportunity to ask questions and address any concerns he may have. It will also give your LMC a chance to get to know your partner before the birth.

Keep him updated with baby's developments week, by week. There are quite a few apps available these days that can track how your baby is developing. Share these details with your partner so he can track the pregnancy with you. Or, you might decide to share these in a fun way such as leaving weekly messages on the bathroom mirror, detailing the size of your baby, what has developed this week and so on, so he stumbles across it when he goes for his morning routine. If your app tracks baby's size by comparing it with various fruits, you could buy the same fruit each week or send him an emoji, to show him how fast your baby is growing. Warning: this will become a lot less fun for you as you reach the end of the pregnancy. You'll be staring at a watermelon and wondering how the heck you're going to push that out!

Get him involved in the decision-making. You will have lots of these to make before and during the birth of your wee one. You might spend more time researching buggy options and creating a Pinterest board of nursery ideas. However, getting him involved in the decision-making process is a good way of helping him feel valued and part of the team. Discuss your ideas with him, and be sure to ask his opinion on all the big decisions. Go shopping together to pick out your baby's first outfit. Encourage him to pick out a few of his favourite pieces – even if you hate the idea of your baby dressed in his sports team colours from head to toe!

Exercise together, there are plenty of benefits to exercising during pregnancy. Not only does it help you stay fit, but it will also help you maintain a healthy weight gain (around 11-16kg) and make sure you are in the best possible health during the pregnancy. Having an exercise partner can help you to stay motivated, and has the added bonus of giving you some quality time together. Keeping up your normal daily physical activity or exercise (sport, running, yoga, dancing, or even walking to the shops and back) for as long as you feel comfortable. There is some evidence that active women are less likely to experience problems in later pregnancy and labour. Check with your LMC or health care provider if you plan to start a new routine.

Another great idea to get him involved is to ask him to help decorate the nursery. This is almost a rite of passage for all new dads-to-be. Set aside a weekend or two so you can do this together. Let him help pick out paint colours, wallpaper, and of course the all-important theme! Getting him to install shelves and fit together any flat pack furniture you may have purchased is always fun (not!) too. Having your baby's nursery ready and waiting – even though your baby won't be sleeping in it for a good few months after the birth – will make the pregnancy feel real. It'll also a big job you can tick off your to-do list.

**Ready for a big suggestion? Invest in your relationship!!!** There I said it. Don't forget, your relationship is more important than ever, now there's a baby on the way. You'll both be busy preparing for your new arrival, and you're bound to have loose ends to tie up at work before you go on maternity leave. Don't let this distract you from spending time as a couple and reminding each other you are a team! Be sure to go on plenty of dates – maybe to see a movie, dinner at a restaurant (doesn't have to fancy) taking a break and getting out of town for the weekend can be a great time to reconnect, relax and it will give you some much-needed time just to enjoy being a couple – because these things will be more difficult (not impossible) when you have your newborn to care for. Enjoy this time before life turns upside down.

Writing and discussing your birth plan together is another activity you can involve him in. You'll be the one giving birth, but your partner has an important role to play too. He needs to know what your wishes are, and what you are expecting him to do (or not do, in some cases) during your labour and birth. This will prepare him for the birth and will help him act as an advocate while you're in labour. You don't have actually to write anything down, but a discussion to make sure you are both on the same page is always a great idea.

And last but by no means least, brainstorm baby names together. One of the most fun parts of having a baby is getting to choose a name! Let your partner be involved in suggesting names and start a running list of your mutual favorites. There are multiple ways to find potential baby names, google may help although sometimes there are too many suggestions and it can be overwhelming! Books from your local library, reading through magazines or online news articles etc is also a great place to check out. Most of us will have names that we can associate with someone from school or work that we wouldn't consider in a million years! Important things to consider when choosing a name, can/do you want it to be shortened? does it rhyme with anything offensive? what do the initials look like? how does it flow when you say it aloud? how would you like to spell it? If you can't decide or agree straight away, don't fret, you have 2 months to register your baby's birth which is free!

