

Essential reading for new fathers and every  
guy who is about to enter fatherhood!

# Call Me Dad!

**A MANUAL FOR NEW FATHERS**

From pre-birth to 12 months



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**DIY Father** 

**Call Me Dad!** is written by dads for guys who are seeking encouragement and advice about parenting. It's packed with information on everything from pregnancy and preparing for the baby, to the end of that first unbelievable year.



#### FINDING OUT YOU'RE GOING TO BE A DAD

Finding out you're going to be a dad makes sense of that old saying, 'today is the first day of the rest of your life'. Your life with a kid. No matter what you thought when you found out ('Fantastic!' 'Shit!' 'But that's impossible!' Or, 'Finally - thank God'), it is always a very special moment. Savour it.

However you look at it, it's big news. So for the next few days you might enter some sort of parallel reality where you wake up convinced it was all a dream, or you might suddenly remember in the middle of a meeting that 'I'm going to be a DAD!'

Usually (though not always) there's a considerable period of time between finding out about the pregnancy and your partner giving birth, so relax for a while and let reality catch up with you.

#### SCOTT:

Renee and I had had an argument, and she was feeling very unwell. But then she did a pregnancy test and we found out we were expecting!

Many couples, sometimes on the advice of their health professionals, elect not to announce the pregnancy until about three months into it, i.e., once they're sure it's all going according to plan.

While keeping the news to yourselves the parallel reality might continue. It's a great time for lots of in-jokes with your partner and hidden smiles when friends or family talk about babies.

It's also an excellent time to listen to your thoughts and feelings and reflect on them. So, despite the fact you might be bursting to tell everyone, bear in mind that once you've told people you may not have the same space and quiet time to get your head around this new situation.

So spend some quality time with your partner and have fun sharing all the weird, wonderful and scary thoughts that are going through your head.

3. It's hard to predict how you or your partner are going to react to the big news. Expect the full emotional spectrum.

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Call Me Dad!



4. A home pregnancy test.

5. You might find out you're going to be a dad in a rather unusual way.



#### SCOTT:

The first thoughts that went through my head: what if our baby is ugly, what if she's weird, what if I pass out during the birth...

#### CHRIS:

I found out early in the morning. My wife was on 'period watch', and was acutely aware that the beginning of a new cycle had come and gone. Unbeknown to me (it was about 4.30 am), she had gone to the loo where she had a handy supply of home pregnancy tests. I was woken by the covers being flung off the bed and my wife jumping on me with the positive result clutched in her hand. 'WE'VE GOT TWO LINES!' she shouted.

#### RICHARD:

Clara and I were having a posh romantic dinner to celebrate my birthday. Towards the end of the meal she gave me a gift. When I opened it, I thought at first it was a pair of All Blacks boxers (maybe a hint about what was in store later!). Two seconds later, I realised it was a Babygro! I've kept the bill from that night - it was one of the last times we went to a flash restaurant for quite a while!

#### MATT:

I learnt I was going to be a father shortly after returning from my second trip to Iraq as a reporter. I had recently been on a medical transport plane alongside dozens of wounded service people in various states of injury and dismemberment - needless to say my own mortality was on my mind. I could have been any one of those guys. When my wife told me she was pregnant - 'there will be three of us for dinner tonight' is how she put it - I was extremely excited. But I also couldn't help thinking of my impending parenthood in light of the experiences I'd had while covering the war. Life is so very fragile. So I started thinking in terms of 'what can I give my daughter, right at this moment, which would benefit her if I weren't here tomorrow?' Perhaps it sounds a bit morbid, but it helps me determine what is important to me and what is important for her.

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Welcome to your new life

**Call Me Dad!** provides helpful advice about all aspects of being a dad, such as:

- + What to expect during pregnancy: Antenatal classes, medical appointments, birth plans and preparing for the big day.
- + Working out the logistics: Who will be the primary caregiver, where the baby will sleep, what to buy and what not to buy.
- + Surviving the birth: What to expect during labour.
- + Life after birth: How to survive the first few days. Things you can do to support your partner.
- + Establishing routines: Feeding, sleeping and hygiene tips and techniques.
- + Different exercises you can try with your baby.



6. Baby swaddled and sleeping on her side.

not latching on properly. However, you might still experience feeding problems, so ask for help if things are not working out.

Whichever method you choose, it's important to make sure the baby gets several good feeds in the first few days. Midwives and caregivers will also regularly check feeding times, duration and sometimes even the baby's weight.

**DAD TIP #27:**

Start a baby journal right away. Record the time your baby has been feeding and for how long, record when the baby was asleep and when it had a full nappy. This will make it much easier to monitor progress. There are gadgets on the market to keep an electronic record of feeding and sleeping times, but pen and paper work just as well.

**MATT:**

When she's breastfeeding, for God's sake don't say anything about how much you miss having her boobs all to yourself. And don't moo. Ever.

**BURPING**

Burping is an essential part of the feeding ritual and a great technique for dads to master early on. Hey - it's really easy! It is important to burp your newborn baby after each feed, as a lot of air gets sucked in that needs to be released. At the beginning you need to help your baby release this air, but later on they will learn to burp by themselves, just like adults.

Burping is a fantastic dad activity in many ways. If your partner is breastfeeding, it's a great way to give her a break from holding the baby. It's also an excellent way to have some extra bonding time with your baby - you will be holding him very close to your body during the burping.

Getting your baby to burp requires a bit of know-how and lots of patience. Probably the most common way to burp a baby is to hold him so that his arms and head are against your shoulder. Keep his back straight and gently pat him on the back, as well as rubbing his back up and down. The patting and rubbing helps the tiny bubbles of air in your baby's stomach form a larger bubble, at which point the air will exit through his mouth. Many people sing or talk softly to their babies while burping them.

Sometimes you need to burp your baby mid-feed when you realise he has stopped feeding. Once burped, reward him by letting him continue feeding. If he's not keen on more feeding you'll probably want to give him a rest or even put him to bed for a nap, or for the night. If you are bottle-feeding, the recommendation is to burp after every 30 millilitres and at the end of feeding.

There are also other techniques you can try out, e.g. lay him flat on your lap, head down, tummy and hips on your thighs. Again, gently pad and rub his back.

**DAD TIP #28:**

Before you start burping your baby, put a cloth nappy or towel on your shoulder or lap... that way you don't have to get changed when your baby spills a bit of excess feed, which happens frequently.

**SILENT NIGHT?**

Now that you are two plus baby, you'll develop a different understanding and appreciation of the meaning of sleep which will continue over the next few years. We recommend wearing your 'sleep is for the weak' T-shirt and smiling when you're tired. By the way, sleep issues tend to come back several times when your baby hits certain developmental milestones. For most babies, most problems are reasonably short-lived,

and there will come a time (even though you won't believe it when you're pacing up and down at three in the morning) that your child will sleep peacefully all night long.

But, to begin with...

**THE FIRST NIGHT**

Amazingly, there is a good chance that your first night with the baby will be great, mainly because the baby will be so knackered from the birth that she sleeps for many hours on end, allowing everyone else to get some much needed rest. If this is not the case for you, don't worry about it: you might as well get used to restless nights.

**... AND BEYOND**

Typically the second or third nights after the birth can be very challenging as the baby now demands full attention and will definitely let you know when he's hungry or unhappy about something. As you'll discover, babies are equipped with a perfect mechanism for letting you know exactly what they need:

What the baby wants to tell you:	How the baby tells you:
I'm still dealing with the after-effects of birth - my head hurts.	Cries a lot.
I'm hungry.	Cries a lot.
I'm tired but can't settle.	Cries.
I've got colic.	Cries a lot.
My nappy is full.	Cries.
I don't like all these people and noises.	Cries a lot.
I'm not comfortable in my current position.	Cries.
I'm too hot/too cold.	Cries.
Nothing is wrong.	Cries anyway.



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**Why is massage good for you and your child?**

- + It's a lovely way to relax with a baby or young child.
- + It helps children to feel welcome, loved and respected.
- + It soothes, relaxes and calms both of you, while also stimulating the baby's brain and sensory system.
- + It strengthens the baby's muscles.

**3. Bubbles**

Watching bubbles helps eye-tracking and upper-body development. You can also use bubbles in the bath: avoid the baby's face but allow bubbles to land on different parts of her body.

**4. Swiss ball**

Using a Swiss ball, place the baby on top (either on his tummy or his back) and gently roll him so that he is upside down, side to side, etc., while holding on to him.

12. Blowing bubbles is fun, keeps infants entertained and helps develop their eye-tracking skills.

13. Baby massage stimulates the brain and muscle development.

14. A Swiss ball can be fun and helps babies develop a sense of balance.



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