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Dad's Guide to Pregnancy

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- Care for your newborn – from bottles to nappies

Dr Roger Henderson
Matthew M.F. Miller
Sharon Perkins



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*Dad's Guide
to Pregnancy*
FOR
DUMMIES®

**by Dr Roger Henderson,
Matthew M. F. Miller
and Sharon Perkins**

 **WILEY**

A John Wiley and Sons, Ltd, Publication

Dad's Guide to Pregnancy For Dummies®

Published by
John Wiley & Sons, Ltd
The Atrium
Southern Gate
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 8SQ
England

Email (for orders and customer service enquires): cs-books@wiley.co.uk

Visit our home page on www.wiley.com

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ISBN 978-1-119-97660-8 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-119-97724-7 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-119-97725-4 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-119-97726-1 (ebk)

Printed and bound in Great Britain by TJ International, Padstow, Cornwall

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



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Sharon Perkins has never been a dad, but she's had lots of experience on the mum side of parenting, with five children and three grandchildren. Almost 25 years as a registered nurse in fertility, labour and delivery, and neonatal intensive care have also taught her a thing or two about pregnancy and babies. Sharon lives in New Jersey with her husband but would live in Disney World if it were legal. The opportunity to write about what she does for a living has been a dream come true.

Dedication

From Roger: For Becky, Douglas, Sarah and Jack. Always.

From Matt: Whether writing this book, watching tennis, or taking a nap, I am inspired, awed and grateful for the love and support of my wife, Constance, and our beautiful daughter, Nola. Thank you for a charmed life.

From Sharon: This book is dedicated to my three grandchildren, Matthew, Emma and Jessica, who keep me current on what's going on in the world of kids.

Authors' Acknowledgments

From Matt: Writing about family takes a deep, rich understanding of what it means to be a good person, and I am grateful to my mom, dad, sisters, nieces, and nephews for teaching me how to be one. Also, a very special thanks to my favorite doula, Holly Barhamand, for teaching and empowering me to explore and educate myself about what childbirth means to me. As this is my first *For Dummies* tome, I am particularly grateful to the folks at Wiley, but also to Sharon herself. She took me under her wing and made this one of the most rewarding, fun experiences of my writing career. To my agent, Grace Freedson, you are a joy to work with and I look forward to the next amazing opportunity you bring my way. Finally, thank you to my wife and, most importantly, to our daughter, an IVF baby born after nearly three years of waiting. And although we waited a long time for you, every day since your birth has been counted among the best of my life.

From Sharon: Wiley took a chance on me with my first book, *Fertility For Dummies*, almost ten years ago, and I've been extremely grateful ever since. In particular, Lindsay Lefevere, Erin Mooney, Chrissy Guthrie, and Caitie Copple have been the usual pleasure to work with throughout this book's creation. Matt Miller has been the easiest coauthor ever! From day one, our writing styles meshed, and this book just flowed. Thanks, Matt, for making this a piece of cake. And, last but not least, I thank my family for giving me so much raw material to work with over the years!

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments at <http://dummies.custhelp.com>. For other comments, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

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Introduction

Welcome to impending fatherhood! Being a dad is better than you can ever imagine and far less scary than you're probably believing it to be. One of the main reasons we wrote this book was to empower men to get actively involved in every aspect of the childbirth process, as well as the care, feeding and loving of newborns. Most dads-to-be have only a dim idea of what parenthood is going to be like, and their excitement mixes liberally with sheer terror and trepidation. We hope this book spares you some of that fear and trepidation by giving you the knowledge you need to feel confident.

Traditionally, men have been removed from the processes of pregnancy, labour and delivery, and raising children. On TV, fathers have long been portrayed as emotionally distant, bumbling fools incapable of changing nappies, getting kids to go to bed or handling any of the routine tasks that mothers seem to do with ease. In reality, today's dad is confident, capable and totally in love with his children – and not afraid to let it show. Not that it all comes easily and naturally. Learning how to support your pregnant partner and, subsequently, to care for a newborn, takes time, effort and education.

Most men in the world will become fathers at some point, and most will enter the experience without much knowledge of how babies develop, how to be a supportive partner or what their role should be in the process. But not you. The savvy readers of this book will be prepared for just about anything – and will know exactly what it takes to be an equal partner on the pregnancy (and parenting) journey.

About This Book

This book answers all the burning questions you have about the impact your partner's pregnancy will have on your life. We tell you how your sex life will change, because we know that's pretty important. But we also explain everything you ever wanted to know about how a foetus develops, what living with a pregnant woman is like and how your wallet will be hit by adding a new member (or members) to your family.

We also delve a little into what to expect in the first six months or so after the baby arrives. We walk you through the ins and outs of feeding, changing nappies, dealing with common illnesses and emergencies, and how to stay sane and true to yourself through it all.

In short, you'll close this book feeling completely prepared for fatherhood. You won't be, because no one ever is, but you'll at least feel like you are until the baby comes.

Conventions Used in This Book

Following are a few conventions we used when writing this book:

- ✔ We don't know if your baby is a boy or girl – you may not even know that yourself. So we use *he* and *she* in alternate chapters.
- ✔ Because we also don't know if your medical practitioner is a doctor or midwife, or a paediatrician or nurse practitioner, we use the term *medical practitioner* when we talk about anyone medical.
- ✔ We call your partner your partner, because that's what she is, in every sense.
- ✔ We use an *italic* font to highlight new terms, and we follow them up with a clear definition.
- ✔ We use a **bold** font to indicate keywords or the actions in numbered steps.
- ✔ We use `Monofont` for web addresses.

What You're Not to Read

If you decide this book is too long, you may decide to skip some of it and thus want to know what's not very important. Naturally, we think every word we've written is not only essential but brilliant, so we're the wrong people to ask. However, information marked with the Technical Stuff icon may be more than you want to have to think about. Information marked with this icon is certainly interesting and helpful, but skipping it won't impede your understanding of the topic in the slightest.

Also, we've included sidebars throughout the book (look for grey-shaded boxes) that often contain interesting but non-essential information and personal stories, and we give you permission to skip them if you really have to.

If your partner is already pregnant, congratulations! That means you can skip Chapter 2, which discusses conception. And we hope everyone will be able to skip reading Chapter 12, which discusses problems that can come up after delivery. However, you may still want to skim this one so you'll know where to turn in the unfortunate event of complications.

Foolish Assumptions

If you picked up this book, we assume you fall into at least one of the following categories:

- ✔ You don't know much about pregnancy.
- ✔ You're an expectant dad.
- ✔ You're hoping to become an expectant dad.
- ✔ You're already a father but are looking to learn new tricks for the next go-round.
- ✔ You know an expectant dad and would like to get into his head and understand why he's behaving the way he is.

Expectant dads are often the forgotten partner in the new family-to-be, and they need all the understanding they can get.

How This Book Is Organised

This book starts with the process of getting pregnant and ends with practical information on day-to-day dad stuff. However, we know you may not be interested in reading about the journey straight through from beginning to end. So feel free to start wherever you want. If tomorrow is your first ultrasound appointment, jump right into that section so you know what to expect. If your partner isn't pregnant yet but you want to read about labour, go right ahead. Every chapter of this book is modular, which means you can understand it without reading other chapters first.

Part 1: So You Want to Be a Dad . . .

Becoming a dad is one of the most exciting times of a man's life, but that doesn't mean you don't also have concerns and questions. This part dives into the normal fears and frustrations associated with deciding to start a family and the actual process of getting pregnant – and no, you don't already know it all!

Part II: Great Expectations: Nine Months and Counting

Your partner may be the one who's pregnant, but you're in it for the ride, too. From morning sickness to labour, we tell you exactly what happens during pregnancy, from your perspective as well as hers and the baby's. We also talk about the fun stuff, like naming the baby, and the not fun stuff, like potential health issues for mum and baby. We also give you an overview of birthing options so you can talk knowledgeably with your partner about what she wants to do.

Part III: Game Time! Labour, Delivery and Baby's Homecoming

No one ever said labour and delivery are fun, but they are interesting, and you have a lot to learn if you want to win the supportive partner of the year award. This part covers everything about actually having the baby, from the first contraction to the first all-night crying session – which just may come from an exhausted parent, not the baby!

Part IV: A Dad's Guide to Worrying

This part touches on all the things that keep you up at night worrying after the baby is born. We discuss possible post-delivery issues such as congenital defects and postpartum depression as well as baby's inevitable illnesses. If your worries are more monetary, we also advise you on handling your money now that you have an expensive new baby and planning for your family's financial security. We also help you stay sane and happy with suggestions for managing your time so that you don't let the new baby take over your life.

Part V: The Part of Tens

The Part of Tens is just fun. We touch on how to be both a super dad and a super partner. We also talk about what it's like to be a stay-at-home dad.

Icons Used in This Book

Icons are another handy tool you can use as you work your way through this book. If you find the tips really helpful, for instance, you can skim through and search for that icon. Conversely, when you see a Technical Stuff icon, you can know that you can skip that information (though it's certainly worth the extra time, if you have it).

Following is a rundown of the icons we use in this book:



The Remember icon sits next to information we hope stays in your head for more than two minutes.



Technical Stuff goes into more detail than you really need to understand the facts, but you may find it interesting if you're an especially curious type.



The Tip icon gives helpful insider info that you may take years to learn on your own.



Whenever we use a Warning icon, you'd better sit up and take notice, because not heeding our warning could entail big problems for you or your loved ones.

Where to Go from Here

This is where we tell you to get on with it and read the book.

Although you can start absolutely any place and get the benefit of our expertise, if your partner isn't yet pregnant or is newly pregnant, we suggest starting at the beginning and reading right on through. Doing so will calm your nerves, we promise.

If you're the last-minute type of guy and you're reading this book just a few months (or weeks!) before the impending birth, you can certainly skip the first trimester stuff (at least this time around) and start wherever makes the most sense for you.

And if you got this book at the beginning of the pregnancy but never got around to opening it until now, when baby has her first case of sniffles, that's okay too – we still have plenty of valuable information for you. Pregnancy is the start of the adventure, but the fun continues long after.

Part I
**So You Want to
Be a Dad . . .**



In this part...

Chances are, the road to fatherhood wasn't something you dwelled on much in your earlier years. When you decide to begin a family, though, exciting thoughts about conception alternate with fears of not being a good dad and concerns about money, time, and a brand-new way of life. In this part we look at the doubts and worries that consume every new dad-to-be and explain the mechanics of getting pregnant. You may think this is one area where you need no help, but many couples find getting pregnant a frustrating struggle, and even those who don't can benefit from a refresher course on conception.

Chapter 1

Fatherhood: A Glorious, Scary, Mind-Boggling and Amazing Experience

In This Chapter

- ▶ Exploring what it means to be a father today
 - ▶ Understanding what will change in your life
 - ▶ Facing the decision of whether to have a baby
 - ▶ Looking down the long road ahead
-

Apparently, congratulations are in order: either you're going to be a father sometime within the next nine months or you're in the planning stages of becoming a dad. Either way, you've come to the right place. You'll face no bigger life decision than choosing to become a parent (and no bigger jolt than being told baby is coming if you didn't expect it!), and the best gift you can give to your soon-to-be child is confidence. And the only way to feel confident before you've ever been a parent is to get yourself prepared for the unknown journey that lies ahead.

Perhaps you've already been floored by equal doses of joy and fear, which is a good sign that you both recognise the magnitude of the change and are up for the challenge of fatherhood. Emotions run deep when you're confronted with the prospect of raising a child, mainly because it's a huge commitment and responsibility that, unlike a job, never has time off. Babies are expensive, confusing, time consuming and, for many fathers, represent the end of a carefree 'youth' that has extended well into adulthood.

Experiencing a jumble of feelings is normal, and the more you take those emotions to heart and explore what fatherhood means to you – and what kind of father you want to be – the easier the transition will be when baby arrives.

Looking at the Concept of Fatherhood

What exactly does it mean to be a father? The answer depends on the kind of father you want to be for your child. In recent years, films, TV and even adverts have begun to transition from the bumbling, know-nothing father of yore to the modern dad who is just as comfortable changing a nappy as he is fixing a car. Fathers today range from traditional to equal partners in every aspect of parenting.

The majority of parents nowadays don't adhere to the traditional masculine and feminine roles that our parents and grandparents grew up with. Women work, men work, and caring for the home – inside and out – is both partners' responsibility. Today, fatherhood is a flexible word that's defined by how involved you want to be in the rearing of your child, but the more involved you are in your child's upbringing, the more likely he is to be a well-adjusted, loving and confident person.

A father? Who, me?

Yes, you. As strange as it sounds, you're going to be a father. A great one at that, because just through the mere act of reading this book, you're taking the proverbial bull by the horns and doing your homework to learn what it takes to be a good dad from day one. As they say, anyone can be a father, but it takes someone special to be a dad.

Even if you've never held a baby before, don't let self-doubt rule the day. Being a good father isn't about knowing everything about everything; it's about loving and caring for a baby to the best of your abilities. So don't be afraid. Yes, that's easier said than done, but being fearful of what lies ahead doesn't change the fact that you've got a baby on the way, however far off.



You may feel silly, but start by saying the words 'I'm going to be a father' out loud a few times. Maybe even look into a mirror while you say it. If the thought of fatherhood scares you, you need to get used to the label, and the more you say and internalise it, the more it will become you.

Reacting to a life-changing event

Dissolving into a tearful, slobbering mess upon finding out that you're going to be a father isn't unusual. Neither is throwing up,