

ENGAGED FATHER  
PROGRAM

DADS & KIDS GROWING TOGETHER



# DAD ZONE:

## GAME STRATEGIES FOR PREGNANCY





The Genesee County Healthy Start Fatherhood Program provides support and parent education to men whose partners are expecting a child, or men who have a young child. Our program provides father-friendly parenting resources and peer-based support, with the goal of enhancing the health and wellbeing of families.

## WELCOME TO FATHERHOOD

Dads make a difference! Kids that have an involved dad have more confidence, get better grades in school, are less likely to use drugs, and are less likely to be involved in criminal activity.

Whether you're a new dad or an old pro, the experience of having a new baby is exciting, fun, challenging, and sometimes difficult.

Many dads don't know how important they are, especially in the first year. But dads play a very important role. Your presence and caring for your baby is critical to your baby's health and development. By caring for your baby, playing with your baby, talking to your baby, and supporting your partner, you are creating a positive relationship with your baby.

We're sure there's some part of you that's excited and worried thinking about the months to come. It's pre-game season, so buckle up, and make room for your partner and her slow-growing baby bump!



## DOCTOR'S VISITS

How often should we see the doctor during pregnancy? Ask your partner's doctor for a schedule of expected visits during pregnancy. Most experts suggest pregnant women see a doctor:

- About once each month for weeks 4 through 28
- Twice a month for weeks 28 through 36
- Weekly for weeks 36 to birth

If the pregnancy is high risk, visits may be more frequent. Families who receive Medicaid can contact their insurance provider in advance and request transportation assistance to doctor's appointments.



# OBSTETRICIAN'S JOB DESCRIPTION

What does this word mean, and who is this OB person your partner keeps talking about? OB stands for Obstetrician. Obstetricians care for mothers and developing babies. They run ultrasounds, answer questions about your partner's health, and help the two of you make decisions if any problems come up. Now that you've got a baby on the way, think of your OB as one of the "MVPs" on your team.



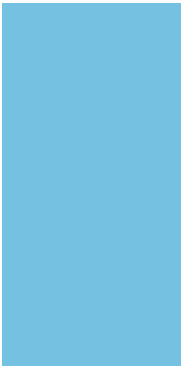
## DAD PRO-TIP

Write down questions you have for your provider in preparation for your visits. Here are some common topics dads have questions about:

- Nutrition and exercise for partner
- Breastfeeding once the baby is born
- Sex during pregnancy
- How to be more involved in the pregnancy
- Birth plans

# ULTRASOUNDS

During the average pregnancy there are usually a few ultrasounds—scans that show you what the growing baby looks like, let you hear your baby’s heartbeat (way faster than an adult’s heartbeat), and check in on your baby’s health. Many fathers say that seeing and hearing the baby during the ultrasound makes everything seem more real and like the baby’s a part of the family.



## Q DAD TALK

“I remember the nurse said. ‘Get ready Dad, you’re about to see who’s inside there.’ And she put the gel on Sheila’s belly, then started rubbing a weird plastic thing around her belly. My heart started beating faster just to hear a life—boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. It just felt like—the feeling’s indescribable, I was just blown away, like my eyes filled up but it’s like I won’t cry, I was just so happy to hear it...The heartbeat is like letting me know it’s on the way, get ready. And I have to admit, I was sneaking a peak for any extra hardware if you know what I mean haha. I wanted a son so badly.”

– Walter

# WHAT TO EXPECT

As much as anyone might like to say that “they just knew what to do” about pregnancy, birth, and parenting, there is so much that just doesn’t come from “common sense.”

## GETTING READY: CLASSES

You might want to take a few online or local classes. Here are a few sources:

- Babycenter.com will give you a list of local childbirth classes
- Hurley Hospital offers low to no cost breastfeeding, childbirth preparation, and baby care classes. For more information, call the Parent Education Department at (888) 611-4462 or register online at [hurleymc.com](http://hurleymc.com).
- McClaren Hospital offers low-cost prenatal and parenting classes. You can find the schedule at [www.mclaren.org](http://www.mclaren.org).



# TAKING TIME FOR YOU AND YOUR PARTNER

Things will be different while you and your partner adjust to the pregnancy and prepare for parenthood. Intimacy levels might change, and there will be new responsibilities to focus on. You and your partner are a team. Do what you can to support her. Stress in pregnant women is linked to premature birth, low birth weight, and other negative developmental effects.

It's scary to admit that you're feeling unprepared for your new baby. Communication is key. If you are feeling nervous, you can try talking to your partner about things that stress you out before the baby arrives so that you have an idea of how to handle things before the baby is here. Being open with your partner about your feelings and being there for her really will make the pregnancy roll more smoothly.

## Q DAD TALK

“When a woman is pregnant, and she’s going through all those emotions, and those changes, the best thing and course of action I could tell a man—just be considerate, be there. Take on your role and your responsibility as a father. What that’s going to entail is going to be different for everybody.”

– Robert, Father of 2

## Q DAD TALK

“I was afraid—was I going to be able to be everything I wanted for this thing that was coming into the world? Did I have enough money? Did I have enough resources? Was I going to be able to live up to the standards? I was afraid I wouldn’t be able to provide—can I provide emotionally? Because I didn’t have support.”

– Shon, Father of 3, Founder of Man2Man University



## Q DAD TALK **Talking to My Pregnant Partner**

“When my girlfriend and I got pregnant, I was scared of losing who we were as a couple to hormones and like arguments where she’d want me to go out to get ice cream while I just wanted to watch the game. But really all I felt like I had to do was concentrate on making myself available when necessary, like we didn’t change as a couple, really, but we had to talk about when she physically needed me and then just needed me to tell her she was pretty or things like that. People don’t talk about how important it is to learn each other’s temperaments so that in the end we could all know when we really needed each other. When it came to month nine, I knew what my role was because we’d talked about how she wanted to be taken care of and what she wanted me to do around the doctors.”

– Calvin



# 6 THINGS TO AVOID SAYING TO YOUR PREGNANT PARTNER

Pregnancy changes women's bodies and moods. Nine months of growing a human in her body will cause some major changes! Do both of you a favor, and never utter the following words together:

- “Wow, you're getting huge.”
- “No thanks, I don't want to hear about the details of childbirth.”
- “You have to pee again?”
- “You're acting crazy.”
- “I don't think you need to worry about a birth plan. Just let the doctors do what they do.”

## DAD PRO-TIP

Try and be careful about your words, and try to make “I” statements instead of “you” statements. Try saying that “I would like more time with you because I am feeling lonely or left out.” Instead of saying, “You always leave me out of everything.” Also, you need to validate her and give yourself some credit too. Try saying, “I know that this is hard for you” or reminding her how excited and grateful you are for her growing your future child in her body.



# BASIC DETAILS ABOUT PREGNANCY

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## 1<sup>ST</sup> TRIMESTER (0-3 MONTHS)

### BABY UPDATE

- Made of 2 layers of cells
- Size of 3 small Legos
- Beginning to have earlobes, eyelids, mouth, and nose
- Miscarriages are more typical in the first trimester
- Can wiggle limbs at 8 weeks

### PARTNER UPDATE

- Has morning sickness at all hours of the day
- May have mood swings and cravings
- More tired
- More gassy

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## 2<sup>ND</sup> TRIMESTER (4-6 MONTHS)

### BABY UPDATE

- Growing from ping pong to softball size
- Getting fingerprints from touching inside of womb
- Skeleton will go from cartilage to bone
- Starting to hear through the womb

### PARTNER UPDATE

- Baby's going to kick more and cause her organs some suffering
- Starting to have a pregnant glow as her body produces 50% more blood than before
- Gaining weight

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## 3<sup>RD</sup> TRIMESTER (7-9 MONTHS)

### BABY UPDATE

- Growing to size of basketball
- Making fingernails, toenails, and hair
- Can blink eyes
- Starting to have all 5 senses

### PARTNER UPDATE

- Feeling serious pokes on her gut and bladder courtesy of baby
- Difficulty walking and sleeping

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## YOUR UPDATE

- Starting to talk about when to tell friends and distant family about pregnancy
- Still excited, but starting to worry about partner's puke sessions
- Thinking about baby as abstract

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## DAD PRO-TIP

- Morning sickness is a real problem. Ask your partner what you can do to help?

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## YOUR UPDATE

- Having more trouble sleeping because she can't sleep on her back (body pillows can help)
- Looking for childbirth classes
- Talking to friends and family who have had babies before

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## DAD PRO-TIP

- Because baby's hearing develops in the second trimester, this is an awesome chance for you to bond with your baby by reading stories, singing songs, playing an instrument, or just talking to your baby in mama's belly. The more you speak to your baby, the more the baby will recognize your voice.
- During this trimester, you may learn the sex of the baby during the anatomical ultrasound. You may find out the gender earlier if you choose to do genetic testing.

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## YOUR UPDATE

- Planning out baby's room
- Installing a car seat
- Financial planning

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## DAD PRO-TIP

- A car seat is a must as they won't let you leave the hospital without one. By the time you and your partner go to the hospital, make sure you've bought and securely installed your baby's car seat. You can get help with the car seat from a local fire station, baby stores, or do it yourself by watching YouTube videos. The seat should be placed in the back seat facing the rear, not the front.

# THE DAY OF THE BIRTH

Pregnancy and the birth of the child is a very confusing experience for everyone. Often, partners of expectant mothers feel overwhelmed, but full of joy at the same time. The birth experience often leads to more respect and understanding of women and their bodies.

It's definitely true, unless you have a date when you've decided with your partner to induce labor or schedule a C-section, that baby's going to make its appearance whenever it can or wants to. It helps to be prepared with a bag waiting for when your baby decides to enter the world!

## Q DAD TALK **The Big Day**

"I was at work the day April went into labor. I was shocked because she was three weeks early, but I got there and when the time came for my son to make his way into the world, I really couldn't believe the magic of everything April's body was doing to get my kid out! I feel silly saying this, but the moment my son was born, it was like time froze still. Everything just stopped. As soon as he started to cry, time unfroze, and it was like a whirlwind. Everything was happening so quickly, and then I was alone with him and his mother. I'll never forget that."

– Timothy





## THE DAD BAG

Your partner probably already knows about having a hospital bag prepared—you should too! A Dad Bag can have many things in it. What goes in there should be tailored to your needs. Some major, useful things for your bag are:

- Insurance info
- ID
- Hospital forms
- Birth plan *(if you have one, bring it as a refresher for yourself to assist mom in notifying the hospital staff of her preferences for labor, delivery, and the postpartum period)*
- Phone charger and phone numbers
- Snacks
- Basic hygiene products *(toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, etc.)*
- Pillows
- Socks/slippers

### DAD PRO-TIP

Consider “skin to skin” contact—holding and cuddling with your new baby—immediately. It helps you and the baby to bond.

## Q DAD TALK

“When I first laid eyes on her, I just broke out in tears. She was just so beautiful, it was like, like this is from me, you know. Tailor made for me and my wife, like just made for us. I felt like I never felt or understood what true love at first sight was until I laid eyes on my daughter.”  
– Darien, Father of 3



## Q DAD TALK

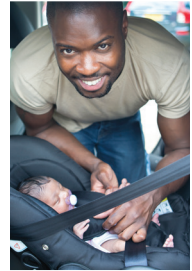
“I don’t think I can be deep and profound, but I remember being terrified to see my wife go through the excruciating pain of child delivery, but when I saw my daughter it was actually the most beautiful experience I’ve ever encountered in my entire life.”  
– Jonathan, Father of 3 girls with another one on the way,  
Ingham/Lansing Healthy Start Supervisor

# WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER BIRTH

After the birth of your child, you may feel joy and happiness— as well as a sense of uncertainty. All of those feelings are normal.

Having a child can have an effect on your everyday life, as well as your relationship with your partner. Your main priorities are ensuring the baby is okay in all parts of life. Taking on the new roles of parenting responsibilities can lead to stress and anxiety but also a new level of joy and pride.

You can take the experience of having a newborn to strengthen your relationship with your partner. Be sure that you and your partner take a couple times a month to spend quality time with each other.



## Q DAD TALK

“I cherish the fact that when my daughter and son are grown, they will be able to say that their dad was there. I love being a father. It’s one of the best things that’s ever happened to me. I relish in each moment that I’m able to do all the things that my father never did for me.

– William, Father of 2

# CHOOSING WHERE I FIT AS A DAD

Society is always telling you how to be a man. Parenting is often one of the first chances a man has to define what kind of man he wants to be. What kind of father do you want to be? How do you want to be different or similar to your own father? This is a time to consider these big questions.

As soon as you look into those little round eyes, you will get this lump in your throat, and your non-existent allergies will start to flare up. That is called love at first sight! A father's love cannot be replaced.





## Q DAD TALK

“The biggest piece of advice that would be for a new dad is prepare yourself mentally, prepare yourself financially if you can, and do your due diligence in being the best father that you can be. It’s going to be a rough road, it’s going to be challenging, but the reward is definitely worth it in the end.”

– Jordan, Father of 2



## Q DAD TALK

“Becoming a new dad is like becoming a new man. Knowing this baby is mine, and I helped create him, and it’s my responsibility to care for him and make sure he has everything he needs...that’s just so cool. There are moments that you’ll be scared, there are moments where you’ll be overwhelmed, there are moments where you feel like it’ll be easier to give up. But there are so many more moments of joy. Don’t give up. And get help if you need it, talk to people if you need it. It will be okay. You won’t have to be a perfect dad. There’s no such thing. So you’ll never be perfect, and you will mess up, but you’ll eventually find a way to better yourself at it.”

– Matt, Father of 1

# COMMUNITY RESOURCES

## MICHILD

Genesee County  
Health Department  
G-3373 S. Saginaw Street  
Burton, MI 48529  
(810) 257-3039

## GENESEE HEALTH SYSTEM

(Formerly Genesee Community  
Mental Health)  
420 W. Fifth Avenue  
Flint, MI 48503  
(810) 257-3705  
Crisis Services, Child and  
Family Services, Adult  
Services & Community Health  
Center, Substance Abuse

## HEARTBEAT

320 E. Fourth Street  
Flint, MI 48502  
(810) 232-3101  
Offers diapers, formula,  
baby clothing, and furniture.  
ID and child's Medicaid card  
is needed for services.

## MOTT CHILDREN'S HEALTH CENTER

806 Tuuri Place  
Flint, MI 48503  
(810) 767-5750  
Children's health services

## CHILD CARE NETWORK OF GENESEE COUNTY

412 S. Saginaw St.  
Suite 302  
Flint, MI 48502  
(810) 407-7285  
Help families find and pay for  
quality childcare

## STRIVE

1108 Lapeer Rd.  
Flint, MI 48503  
(810) 232-5661  
Flintstrive.com  
Employment training  
and support

## INVOLVED DAD

(313) 757-1388

[Involveddad.org](http://Involveddad.org)

Father-centered peer support group

## ONLINE

[Babycenter.com](http://Babycenter.com)

[Babble.com](http://Babble.com)

[Daddyplace.com](http://Daddyplace.com)

[Fatherhood.org](http://Fatherhood.org)

[Involveddad.org](http://Involveddad.org)

[Newparent.com](http://Newparent.com)

[Parenthelp123.org](http://Parenthelp123.org)

[Parenthood.com](http://Parenthood.com)

[Parents.com](http://Parents.com)

[WebMD.com](http://WebMD.com)

[Zerothreethree.org](http://Zerothreethree.org)

Healthy Start is a group of organizations (Genesee County Health Department, Hurley Medical Center, and Ascension at Home) working together to help moms, dads, and babies with various health-related needs. We help parents who are pregnant and/or have children ages 0-18 months who live in Genesee County. The Genesee County Healthy Start is a member of the National Healthy Start Association.



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Parenting in Context Research Lab



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