

Pregnancy is the beginning of fatherhood, and there's a ton you can do to help. Your biggest job is to take good care of mom.

## Key Terms

There are some new words you'll hear during pregnancy. Some of the main ones are:

- Trimesters—pregnancy is broken down into three parts, called trimesters. Each is about three months long. Pregnancy typically lasts about 40 weeks, total.
- LMP and Estimated Due Date – LMP is “last menstrual period.” Pregnancy is typically dated using this, until an ultrasound gives a more precise date. It's a best guess. Your baby's actual birthdate will be different in reality.
- Prenatal - Prenatal means “during pregnancy”. Common prenatal terms you'll hear are:
  1. Prenatal Care – these are important doctor visits to check the health of mom and baby.
  2. Prenatal Vitamins - These contain vitamins and minerals, such as folic acid, that mom and baby need. She should take these every day during pregnancy.

## How Can I Support Her?

Keeping mom healthy starts with maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including: a nutritious diet, plenty of hydration, adequate rest, and moderate, low impact exercise.

Change your unhealthy habits and encourage her to change hers, such as:

- Smoking. (If you can't kick the habit, smoke outside of your home and car, and away from surfaces she touches where nicotine can collect.)
- Drinking alcohol/drug use. Drugs can also harm the placenta, which is critical to the baby's survival while in the womb.
- Partying/late nights.

Your attitude toward her and about the pregnancy makes a big difference, too. Try to:

1. Be responsive to her needs and understanding. She needs patience and positivity.
2. Be understanding. She will have changing emotions, fatigue, aches, and more.
3. Not be a drill sergeant. Give her some slack.
4. Follow-through!! One of the best ways to support her is to talk to her about what she needs from you and then follow through. **Hear her, support her, and let her feel what she is feeling.**

## What's My Role?

There are specific roles you can take on during pregnancy. For example:

- Exercise. She will need low-impact exercise during the entire pregnancy. Be her partner - take walks together or some other activity. It's good for you both.
- Encouragement. Her discomfort, body changes, and emotions are all normal. Tell her she's doing a great job and that she's beautiful. **Replace things you shouldn't say with things she would love to hear.**

Specific discomforts that you can help her with include heartburn and nausea/morning sickness, fatigue, and emotional changes. She should also let her provider know if she's prone to depression.

There are practical things you can do throughout pregnancy, too, such as:

1. Encourage her to schedule her prenatal checkups and go with her on as many of them as you can.
2. Help put together the birth plan.
3. Help prepare the home for baby's arrival.

### **First Trimester**

The first trimester will likely be her hardest. She may feel REALLY tired, and have breast tenderness, nausea, and be emotional. Make sure there is food on hand that doesn't make her feel sick and remove the stuff that does. Encourage her to take the time to rest.

### **Second Trimester**

She will likely feel her best in the second trimester! She'll have more energy and start looking more pregnant.

### **Third Trimester**

**This is a great time to get the baby's room ready, start a childbirth class, and purchase and install the rear-facing infant car seat. This trimester is a great time to do some baby-related tasks together.**

She will become more uncomfortable as the baby gets bigger. She may have trouble sleeping or doing her normal day-to-day things. She'll likely feel Braxton-Hicks contractions. These are false labor as her body prepares and practices for birth. Listen to her fears and remind her how confident you are in her.

Doctor appointments will happen every two weeks up to week 36, and then every week until birth. **Try to go to the appointments with her and make sure you get all your questions answered. Also, make sure you finish that birth plan and that you know what you're doing. This birth plan is the best way to have labor and delivery go the way she wants. Knowing it and being able to make choices should also help ease anxiety about delivery.**

## **What can I Expect in Pregnancy?**

1. Expect to feel helpless at times. It's okay. What's important is that you are there for her.
2. Expect things to change fast. Her wants and needs may change quickly. Be patient. Be flexible.
3. Expect to change, too. Weight gain and mood changes can happen for guys during this time, too.

Remember, pregnancy brings big changes for everyone involved, but especially mom. Your job is to help her through them. You're her partner in this, and you can be a darn good one.

#### Resources:

1. Depression During Pregnancy, March of Dimes, March 2019, <https://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/depression-during-pregnancy.aspx>, accessed 9/20/21
2. Depression During and After Pregnancy, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Maternal and Child Health, Healthy Resources & Services Administration, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857, [https://mchb.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/mchb/MaternalChildHealthTopics/maternal-womens-health/depression\\_during\\_and\\_after\\_pregnancy\\_en.pdf](https://mchb.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/mchb/MaternalChildHealthTopics/maternal-womens-health/depression_during_and_after_pregnancy_en.pdf), accessed 9/20/21
3. "First Trimester Pregnancy: What to Expect." By Mayo Staff, Mayo Clinic, 2017, [www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/in-depth/pregnancy/art-20047208.j](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/in-depth/pregnancy/art-20047208.j), accessed 9/26/21