

A Guy's Guide to the Delivery Room

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INTRODUCTION

The pending arrival of a baby is a wonderful time! It doesn't matter what the circumstances, when a new baby comes into the world, it is a true miracle. As is expected, much of the focus in the delivery room is on the woman. After all, she is the one who is enduring the pain of childbirth. What many people don't consider is that the men in the delivery room have their own issues as well.

Years ago, men weren't allowed in the delivery room. Guys were relegated to the waiting room, left to pace a hole in the floor as they waited for their offspring to be born. Today, however, there has been an enormous shift in tradition, with 90 per cent of dads now taking a hands-on approach in the birthing process.

The journey begins not only with conception but with choosing the nursery furniture, picking out names, and taking Lamaze classes. Even with the best of training, guys may still feel out of place when attending the birth of a child. With the advent of birthing rooms taking the place of the sterile operating room, grandparents, uncles, friends, and even siblings are invited into the birth experience.

Obviously you cannot know exactly what it feels like to carry and birth a newborn; however, you can learn as much as possible about all the stages of pregnancy, labor, delivery, and newborn bonding. Perhaps once you understand the prenatal class basics you might start having doubts about how you will be able to handle it all. Try to set those uncomfortable thoughts aside. Studies show that men are more likely to get and stay involved in the care and nurturing of their children if they are present at the births.

So what's a guy to do? If you're the father to be, you have probably heard the horror stories. You're called every name in the book. You're blamed for everything from inflation to the price of gas to getting your gal in the situation she's in. It's normal. It's probably going to happen. But how do you deal with it? That's hard to say. But the birthing experience is still something every guy can – well, not exactly enjoy, but, at the very least, participate in.

It all begins with the onset of labor. The pains begin. She screams with each contraction. What do you do? At this point, running to the store for a late night craving is out of the question. Right now, you're expected to be the supportive one. But you're confused and aren't sure exactly what to do. It can be difficult watching someone you love in pain – and childbirth IS PAINFUL! It's like a pain you, as a man, can never know.

Research shows that when a woman has a supportive birth partner, this reduces her need for pain-killing drugs and increases her satisfaction with the birth experience. This also can reduce her stresses and worries about being a

mother and make her more confident after the baby is born. Having a familiar face can be very reassuring.

There are many things you can do to help the momma to be along the way to becoming a full-fledged mother. You may be confused – especially when things start getting a little frantic – and they will! With the help of this book, you'll be much more prepared for the birthing experience.

In these pages, you'll be better prepared to help with back labor, understanding what happens in the birthing room, easing the pain of mom, and dealing with your own feelings of helplessness. It can be a daunting and scary experience, but you CAN get through it – just like SHE can!

Read on and get the definitive “Guy's Guide to the Delivery Room”!

CHANGING ROLES

As we've said, not so long ago, the man's place during child birth used to be in a smoke-filled waiting room holding a box of cigars awaiting the arrival of his child. Now the opposite is true. What brought about this change?

It seems books might have had a role to play in this transformation. In 1974, Robert Bradley wrote the book *Husband-Coached Childbirth*, in which he basically empowered men to take as crucial a role in the birthing process as their partner (albeit not physically, of course!). At the time, Bradley was both hailed as a champion for men's rights in the delivery room and criticized as someone who was trying to advocate controlling the woman. Despite, or perhaps because of the controversy, the book 'gave birth' to the 'Bradley method' and a series of classes, still running today, in the USA.

Putting husbands in the delivery room not only coincided with feminism but was intimately wrapped up with the natural childbirth movement and its effort to see the modern body in a more holistic fashion.

The change also could have been brought about with cultural developments. Back in the 50's and 60's, it was an unspoken rule that men just didn't go into the delivery room. However, in the 70's and 80's, men began questioning the medical status quo and took a more hands-on approach to child rearing and their rights to be present during their child's birth.

The dissolution of the nuclear family also contributed to the change with fewer women around to take care of the expectant mother's needs during childbirth. This naturally led to the man taking on that responsibility.

Changing attitudes about pregnancy in general also brought more men into the delivery room. With more and more people having children without being married as well as the rise in teen pregnancy rates, the man in the delivery isn't always the baby's father.