

Daddy and Me



During pregnancy, dads-to-be may sometimes feel a bit redundant – after all, everything important is happening in the mother's body. Once the baby is born, however, dads can become directly involved in looking after their new offspring. Well ... they can ... but even today, when men are more involved in childcare than ever before, it's surprising how many of them still feel they have little to offer their child in the early years.

But research has shown that dads play a vital role in a child's life right from the start – their input is important in building good foundations for later life. So, the message to all dads is this: you don't have to wait until your son or daughter is old enough to kick a football to get involved!

We're all very different, and some dads will take to this like a duck to water, but for others who might be in need of a bit of encouragement, here are some tips for building a strong relationship with your son or daughter from the beginning:

- **During pregnancy and labour**

This is a time to support and care for 'Mum' as much as possible. Show an interest in the pregnancy and accompany her to ante-natal appointments if you can. You might like to keep track of the baby's development on-line – www.babycentre.co.uk/pregnancy/fetaldevelopment

- **When you have a newborn**

If your baby is being breastfed, you may not be able to contribute much with feeds, but you can do pretty much everything else from burping (the baby, that is) through to bedtime! Bounty have a very helpful guide to nappy changing and bathing a baby on their website for men - visit www.newdadssurvivalguide.com And once you get used to giving cuddles you won't want to stop!

- **With older babies**

Some dads get used to always being with the mum or someone else whenever they are with their baby, but don't be afraid to have some alone time. You could get out the pram and go for a little walk or take a short drive together. It may seem scary at first, but your confidence will soon grow.

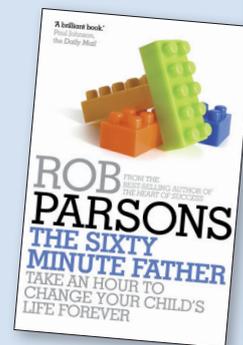
- **As they become toddlers**

Young children soak up attention, experiences and information, so take every opportunity you can to play with them, read to them, sing to them and talk to them. You could take them out for 'daddy time' to the park, the library, the swimming pool or a café. You may even find a 'dads' toddler group' nearby where you can meet up with other fathers.

It may not be easy to give your baby or toddler 'Daddy and Me' time, particularly if you are not living with your child or work long hours away from home, but the difference it will make to you and your child, is well worth the investment.

Take just one hour to find out how to be a better dad

In *The Sixty Minute Father* Rob Parsons helps fathers to ensure that they don't miss out on the greatest opportunity of their lives.



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Research has shown that there are definite benefits for children in having an 'involved' father-figure - even if Dad isn't living at home¹. And if your child's biological father is not around, trusted and involved father-figures, such as uncles and granddads, can bring the same advantages. Here are some of the benefits:

- Better cognitive and problem-solving skills and a higher IQ
- Greater educational motivation and attainment
- Improved social and language skills resulting in better relationships into adulthood. And if they marry, a stronger marriage
- Absence of emotional and behavioural difficulties in adolescence. In particular, boys are less likely to get into trouble with the law and girls are less likely to suffer mental health problems
- Higher self-esteem and a more confident, positive outlook on life

[1] Data from the Father Involvement Research Alliance 2007 and Fatherhood Institute 2009

This information is supplied in good faith but Care for the Family cannot accept responsibility for any advice or recommendations made by other organisations.

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Care for the Family has been supporting and encouraging families in the UK since 1988. Its family-building events have been attended by over 320,000 people and many more have been helped through special initiatives - including stepfamilies, bereaved parents and those parenting alone. Founded by best-selling author and speaker Rob Parsons, the charity is committed to strengthening family life and helping those who face family difficulties.

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