



Baby steps

REAL PARENTING ADVICE

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Tough job: Modern fathers have big roles in the birth process. **Picture:** GETTY IMAGES

The latest

FOOTPRINTS TO KEEP

THE new mess-free Inkless Print Birth Certificate from Belly Art is the perfect baby shower gift. Simply rub the inkless wipe on the newborn's feet and stamp the footprints on the birth certificate — no paint or ink required. RRP \$29.95. Buy at www.bellyart.com.au and selected stockists.



CARRYING ON

THE new Ergo Baby Performance baby carrier has just about everything — it suits newborns to preschoolers up to 20kg and can be worn on the front, back or hip. The water-repellent outer layer makes it suited to outdoor sports. RRP \$189 until Christmas. Available from next month in selected baby stores or at www.babesinarms.com.au



MASSAGE RETREATS

PARENTS with their baby can enjoy a Japanese-style country spa and wellness retreat in Hepburn Springs.



The three-night retreats at Shizuka Ryokan include accommodation, breakfasts, massage workshops and a private post-natal consultation with a midwife, for \$349 a room a night. September 14-16 or December 7-9. More: www.shizuka.com.au; 5348 2030.

WIN

BABY Bunting has come to the rescue of parents-to-be wanting

to buy the Beema Q that has been hard to find since



the closure this year of all Babyco stores, where the popular three-wheeler was sold. One Baby Steps reader can win a Swallow Beema Q Nero and bassinet, valued at \$468, from Baby Bunting (www.babybunting.com.au). For terms and conditions, go to www.heraldson.com.au/lifestyle/competitions. Vic residents only. Closes noon August 19, 2010.

NEXT WEEK

THE classic toys you once loved and can buy now for your baby.

Birthing for blokes

LONG gone are the days the father-to-be would pace in the hospital corridor or head to the pub while his partner pushed out a baby.

Modern dads are expected to be by their partner's side every agonising step of the way — but there's so much more to the job than the occasional comforting hand squeeze and cutting the cord.

Man With a Pram, out next month, is billed as "the bloke's guide" to pregnancy from conception to birth, written in a witty, but informative style by two Australian dads who believed the current pregnancy literature was too "preachy, over-serious and well, boring" to appeal to men.

In this following edited extract, authors Jon Farry, a nurse and qualified midwife, and Stephen Mitchell prepare dads-to-be for the lead-up to "the best moment of your life".

Watching, sorry helping, your partner give birth can be quite a confronting experience, partly as the first time round you're not going to have seen her, or anyone for that matter, going through the pain of labour.

To get an idea of what it's going to be like (for your partner) imagine the groans and facial expressions of a WWE Wrestler, and now imagine they're not faking.

Don't worry; it's all perfectly normal, unless a caregiver tells you otherwise.

Like bungee jumping, you will experience terror along with overwhelming emotions, the difference being that bungee jumping,

DAD'S CHECKLIST

If your partner is getting regular contractions, ring your caregiver and your support people.

Offer your partner whatever support and pain relief you can while at home. **Get everything you need for the hospital and put it in the car. Don't forget the camera.**

When your caregiver gives you the green light to head for the hospital, do so promptly but without haste — no running the red lights, guys!

Hand over your birth plan at the

hospital, but be ready to make changes to it if necessary.

If pain relief or obstetric interventions are recommended by your caregiver, help your partner make sensible decisions about these things.

Continue to offer support and encouragement through transition, the second stage of labour and all that comes after delivery.

Get ready for shock and awe (or is it arwgh?).

once over, doesn't usually reduce a grown man to tears of joy.

But have no doubt about it, of all those memorable events you go through in life — be it getting your first car, meeting your partner, getting married — you will remember your child's birth more clearly than any of them.

It's worthwhile looking at the job description.

LABOUR ASSISTANT: If your partner wants a shoulder to lean on, it's expected that you provide it.

You may find yourself being a human Hills Hoist, providing essential upright support to your labouring partner.

LIAISON OFFICER: During labour and birth your partner may not be in the best psychological state to communicate with others, and her vocabulary is likely to consist of grunts, groans and the occasional obscenity. You may have to assist her by acting as an interpreter.

TEAM PSYCHOLOGIST AND MOTIVATIONAL THERAPIST: Labour can be a roller-coaster ride of emotions, with your partner moving between excitement and despair.

Your role is to try and keep her on as even a keel as possible. Good luck, buddy!

DECISION-MAKING ASSISTANT: Try making an informed decision while pushing out a pumpkin!

Support people should have a good idea of what may happen during labour in order to help make effective and informed decisions. So read up.

DOGSBODY: Provide your partner with plenty of food and fluids if permitted by your caregiver.

Beyond that, basically do anything she asks.

PHOTOJOURNALIST/CAMERAMAN/ DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER: It's usually one of your responsibilities to record your child's day of birth.

However, if it prevents you from taking an active part in the baby's birth, hand the responsibility over to someone else if possible (but not to some guy you met in the corridor).

Remember to charge the camera, and print or back up the photos as soon as you can.

PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST: Keeping the public notified with email or text releases is an important part of the job, along with progress reports to close members of the family.

Man With a Pram will be in bookstores next month. RRP \$24.99. Published by Hachette.



Survival guide RAINY DAY ACTIVITIES AT HOME

■ I empty the plastics drawer in the kitchen and she plays with a whole bunch of new toys.

Nicole Latham, Rowville

■ We make bridges and hills out of all the pillows in the house and climb under and over.

Amanda Pajewski, Warragul

■ I put my son in his swing with the blind up and we watch the trees move in the wind and the rain fall.

Marianne Buyskes-Abrahams, Ringwood East

■ If it is not too cold I dress my daughter up in waterproof pants and let her explore the wet backyard. She can run around without getting wet

and cold and then we come inside for a nice warm drink.

Megan Mallen, Rowville

■ The other day we went to the spice rack — he loved smelling the different aromas, especially cinnamon.

Kirilee Evans, Eltham