



THE GREATEST
THING IN THE WORLD!

CONGRATULATIONS ON
BECOMING A FATHER!

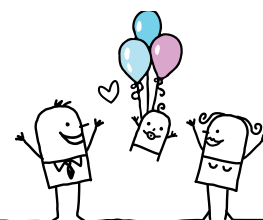
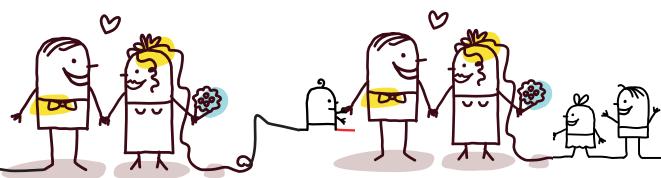
Fatherhood brings along many new, fun and challenging things. In this booklet you can find some basic information on the journey of becoming a father.



THE GREATEST
THING IN THE WORLD!

Becoming a father will change your life. The change will affect your everyday routines, your relationships and the way you see yourself and your life.

ENJOY THE RIDE!
DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK
FOR HELP IF YOU HAVE ANY
QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS!



NUCLEAR FAMILY

This is not rocket science. A man and a woman fall in love, move in together and the woman gets pregnant as planned / as a surprise / with some persuasion. Both the man and the woman begin their growth process towards parenthood.

BLENDED FAMILY

Often the story begins in a similar way than in the previous section, but in this case either one or both already have children and ex-spouses. This couple will have a child together. The father is a father figure for the spouse's other children and participates in raising them.

SURPRISE OR ACCIDENTAL PREGNANCY

It was supposed to be just a little bit of fun or a friendship, but all of a sudden you are becoming a father. You may not live together or even know each other very well.

THE CHILD HAS BEEN PLANNED, WORKED FOR AND WANTED FOR A LONG TIME

Both joy and disappointment have been part of the journey. Great efforts have been made and finally we are pregnant. In this situation, what kind of feelings do you find obvious and easy? And which feelings feel more complex and difficult to say out loud?

MORE RESPONSIBILITY

What have been your responsibilities until now? Have you taken care of your siblings? Yourself? Your relationship? Studies, work, finances, etc.? What will you be responsible for from now on?

- » the expected or newborn baby
- » yourself
- » your relationship
- » the entire family

Changes are bound to happen in yourself too. Have you already noticed? Have there been changes in the way you think or feel? How about what kinds of things fill your days and who you spend your time with?

GROWING INTO FATHERHOOD IS A PROCESS

Talk about fatherhood with the mother of the child.

How well-prepared do you feel and what areas still need more focus?

- » taking care of the child and the relations between the three of you
- » household work
- » purchases and benefits (Kela etc. – see more information on the reverse side)
- » combining work and family life

What kinds of thoughts and feelings arise?

- » what kind of father do I want to be?
- » what kind of things make me worry?
- » what brings me joy?

How do my other relations affect my fatherhood?

- » circle of friends, are there other fathers or fathers-to-be?
- » who could I learn from about being a father?
- » who can I talk openly to about fatherhood?

How can you participate?

- » join in on the visits to maternity clinic
- » actively ask questions and talk about things related to becoming a father
- » learn how to care for the baby: how to change the nappy, wash, spread lotion, bathe, dress, put to sleep, and the possible “bottle-feeding show”

It is a full day job to be a mum, and it is important for her to have some free time too. Prepare yourself to cut down on your after-work activities, and help with caring for the baby as much as possible.

Who said that you were born to be a father?

YOU GROW TO
BE A FATHER!

Take a large sheet of paper and draw all the people who will take part in your newborn child's life. What opportunities and challenges might lay ahead?

FACTS:

- » A baby can bond with both the father and the mother; in the same way a parent can love several children.
- » Fathers are also programmed for taking care of babies. Being close to a baby increases the father's hormone levels as well.
- » It is beneficial for a baby to get accustomed to both parents' ways of caring.

- » Engaging in fatherhood has a positive effect on your wellbeing, self-confidence and happiness.
- » You learn to multi-task efficiently.
- » Breast milk is the best food for a newborn. Your support and encouragement is important for the mother to start breastfeeding successfully.
- » A child who has a close relationship with his father is more likely to do well in school, get in less trouble during teenage years, have better social skills and have fewer mental health issues.

MORE INFO

www.ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi



PREPARING FOR THE LABOUR

- » Attend childbirth education classes with the mother of your upcoming baby.
- » Talk to the little one already before he is born. What do you notice?
- » Get plenty of sleep.
- » Share your thoughts and feelings with other fathers or at the child health centre.
- » Read the material given at the child health centre.
- » Pack a hospital bag together – what things do you need?
- » Prepare for the first day at home with the newborn.
 - Make sure there is enough food and other supplies.

FATHER’S / OTHER SUPPORT PERSON’S PRESENCE DURING CHILDBIRTH

Studies have found that their presence:

- » tends to result in shorter labours
- » reduces complications and the incidence of caesarean births
- » reduces negative feelings about the childbirth experience
- » gives a good start for the child–father relationship.

It is important for a woman to have someone to provide her with physical and emotional support during childbirth. If you do not feel comfortable with being there during labour, this important task may be taken care of by a

- » family member
- » friend
- » doula (a volunteer birth companion and post-birth supporter).

EMOTIONS

Also fathers may feel down and depressed during and after pregnancy. There may be different kinds of worries and concerns about having a child. It is a big change.

- » It is wise to talk about certain things to someone other than the expectant mother.
- » It is a fact that also fathers may have concerns and mixed feelings about becoming a parent.

“Becoming a father has been like a roller-coaster. Being together is simply awesome, yet sometimes I feel anxious and scared, and sometimes calm and peaceful.”
(father, 29 yrs)



YOU AND WORK

- » Agree on paternity leave with your employer well before the baby is born.
- » Do not forget to take all of the parental leaves that you are entitled to. Take full responsibility for the baby; experience the life of a stay-at-home dad. This time may be the most meaningful time of your life.
- » Make sure to leave work early – your help and presence is much needed at home.
- » You are entitled to temporary care leave if your child gets ill.
- » Say no to working over-time and going on business trips. Caring for your child is a much more important job.
- » Tell your co-workers about becoming a father; encourage other fathers to share their experiences.

Don't be shy about showing that you're a new father!

KELA BENEFITS

- » You are entitled to take paternity leave after the birth of your child (about 3 weeks) and the rest of the leave (about 6 weeks) after the parental allowance has ended. In addition, you are entitled to parental leave and childcare leave.
- » Please look for more detailed information on allowances and application time frames on www.kela.fi/web/en/families.
- » You can claim allowances by logging in to Kela's eServices with your online banking user ID and password on www.kela.fi/asiointi.
- » Notify your employer at least 2 months before taking paternity leave.

Questions? Please do not hesitate to call Kela's phone service for families with children on 020 634 2550 Monday to Friday from 9 am to 3 pm, or ask for help online www.kela.fi/kerttu.

MORE FATHER CARDS BY THE FEDERATION OF MOTHER AND CHILD HOMES AND SHELTERS

In addition to the card “The greatest thing in the world!”, we have also published three other cards:

Talk and listen

- » Being the father in a family. A balanced relationship between a father and his child also brings warmth to the parents' relationship and keeps up a positive family spirit.

A healthy and balanced father

- » Wellbeing and happiness for the entire family. Your own wellbeing creates a solid foundation for the wellbeing of your spouse and children.

The safety factor

- » Father ensuring the safety of his family. As a father, how can you make sure that your children feel safe and secure?

www.ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi

Ask for more father cards and information at the child health centre!