

Where it all started...

It all started with the full dilatation. And there was something with slime. The uterus could not open any further and the contractions began. Your girlfriend made a sound somewhere between roaring like a lion and the mooing of a cow. She looked at you like she really had to do number two. 'I can't take it anymore!' she screamed.

Where was the midwife? You picked up your smartphone and begged if she wanted to come. When your girlfriend made noises in the background like half a zoo, the midwife said: 'I already hear it.'



Her water broke. A funny smell spread through the room. The obstetrician walked in. 'I love the smell of sweet almonds,' she said. Your girlfriend was still roaring. The midwife encouraged. She had to keep going on like this. 'Yes, press! You can press well... Holy!' Meanwhile, all kind of things happened between those legs. Fertile water and blood flowed... It seemed to last hours. And then something strange appeared: it seemed like a huge mango-sized currant. It did not look good.



The midwife acted like everything was ok. The currant came out at every contraction, before popping back in. But at one point, the currant didn't pop back. 'The head,' the midwife said. 'Only a few good presses... You can do this.'

Your girlfriend turned red. Than purple. Her eyes almost popped out of her head, and bang – like a slime squid, your baby was born.

He got immediately tested with a pet on his buttocks. The baby was crying. Welcome! The fingers and toes were counted. And you got to cut the umbilical cord. That felt like cutting a piece of cartilage of a chicken. Your girlfriend was exhausted. She looked like a dot whipped cream in love at the little sticky baby on her belly. So, you thought, that was done. But you overlooked one thing. (Drumroll.) The afterbirth!



The party was not finished yet: the placenta had to leave the body as well. That caused new contractions. After a little more pressing, your girlfriend looked cross-eyed and a fat meaty coloured flatfish came out. The midwife lifted it by its tail.

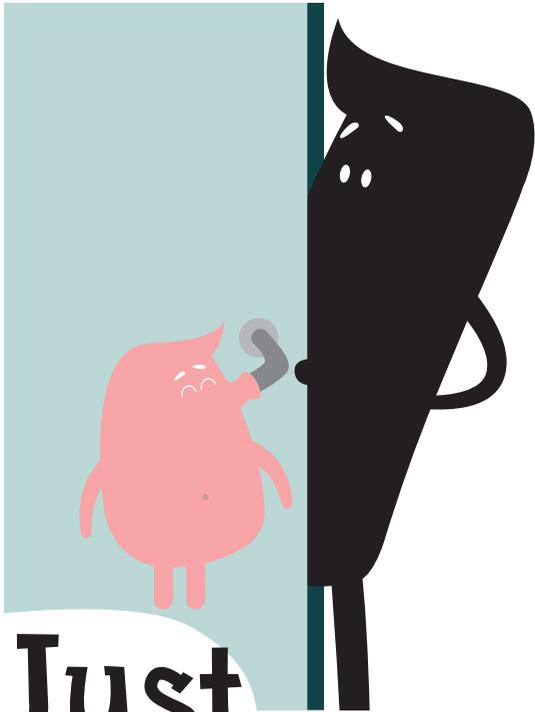
'Look, this is it,' she said.

'Ooooh... How beautiful,' your girlfriend said.

Then there was a bit of a giggling atmosphere. Everybody giggled for a bit and started to talk to the baby: 'Hello, you did well.', or: 'You wanted to stay in for a bit longer, huh?'. You did not say anything.

Than the baby got his first diaper and a hat. It was the beginning of an exciting adventure.

And you... you were hungry.



Just

born babies look funny. They sometimes have a pointy head and eyes that move independently. They sleep up to 17 hours a night. The piece of umbilical cord that's still attached to the baby may look a bit black and dry. Nothing to worry about. It will fall off by itself after a week or so.

What also doesn't look good is the baby's first poop. It looks like a black syrup of semi-digested hair rests mixed with homemade drop beer.

Sometimes babies get a little yellow between their second and seventh day. If you don't trust it, you may panic a bit and grab the phone. Doctors and midwives are used to being called for nothing. Reassuring new fathers belongs to the more fun jobs of their work.



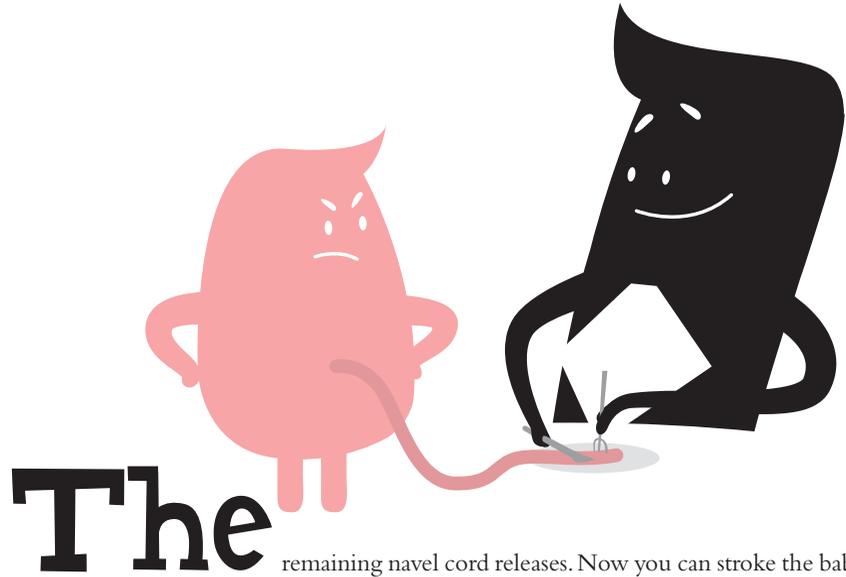
Your

girlfriend walks like a cowboy and a visit to the shower looks like a bloody scene from a horror movie. There is also a lady in the house who acts like she is at home and who looks regularly between your girlfriend's legs. This is the maternity nurse. If your girlfriend wants another one, take it seriously and arrange another one.

You walk to the kitchen to grab a fork, and once in that kitchen you can't remember what you were doing again. In this confused state you will have to arrange the baby's civil status. That must be done within three business days.

There will also stop someone by for the first vaccination. This is probably the first time someone is hurting the prettily baby skin. It feels like someone intentionally breaks the screen of your new smartphone with a small brick. It is important to not become violent.

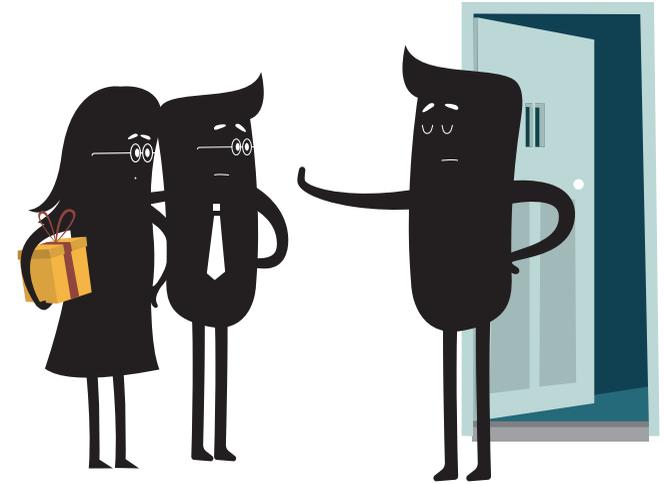
Your girlfriend knows as much about breast feeding as you do. Yet she will find herself deficient if it fails. Speak her courage, and say she does it amazingly. Almost all mothers get after a day or five (it may be ten) so-called stagnation: hot, big painful breasts. Sometimes a flask machine is needed.



remaining navel cord releases. Now you can stroke the baby's belly.

Sometimes the baby returns a little milk, as it is called in maternity care. It is something between spitting and vomiting. Whole ditches of milk come out again. The baby often suffers from cramps. Lay the baby down for a while and make cycling movements with his legs or keep the baby straight up for a little while. Changes are you will be rewarded with a big burp or fart.

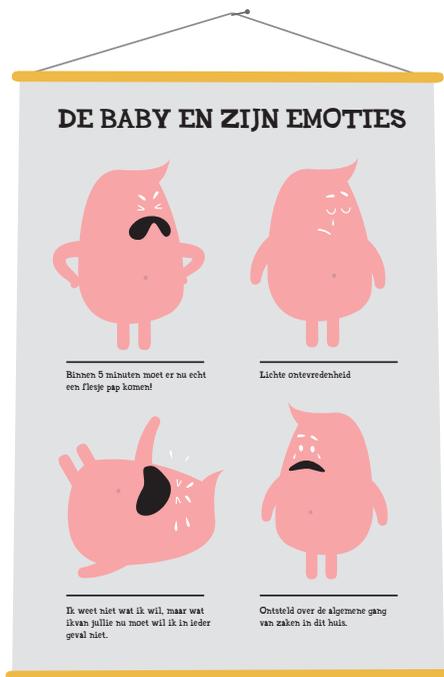
What a baby likes is sucking. Your pinky, a nose, an old cloth or a pacifier. A baby obviously enjoys sucking. Sucking on pacifiers and thumbs has long been seen as bad for babies, both for their mental development as for their teeth. However, this seems to be better than expected. In recent years, more attention has been paid to the positive side of sucking on a teat or thumb. For example, it reduces stress. A sucking baby is a happy baby. Do you find it confusing? Perhaps you should suck your thumb again as well.



are many hassles during the first weeks after child-birth.

Most likely, the fathers, the mothers, the sisters, the brothers and the very best friends have already stopped by. Leave the birth cards for a little while. Postpone the maternity visit as long as possible. The outside pressure is huge. But you decide when the door opens, like the PA of a world-known rapper who stayed too long in a coffee shop. The later you send the cards, the later the maternity visit will start and the better it will be. Maternity visit is fun, especially when it is your friends. But there is a fat change your girlfriend is not her old-self yet (as far as she will ever be).

It sounds crazy, but a mother should not be alone alone with her children all day long. It doesn't matter at what culture you look, young mothers get help from mothers, mother-in-law, aunts, sisters, brothers and fathers. And if there are no mothers and sisters in the neighborhood, you're the ideal person to keep your girlfriend company and help with baby stuff. "Yes, but I have to work for five days a week." Sorry. Just make arrangements.



Crying

is for a young baby the only way to communicate. See it as a kind of talking. If you pay attention, you will notice that one cry is not the same as another one. There is a cry for hunger, pain, boredom, itch, cold and a theatrical cry. See it like a puzzle. Experiment to discover what calms the baby. Make crazy faces, make cycling movements with the baby's legs, put a blanket over him leave the blanket, show YouTube videos with atomic explosions and blow up a balloon. Rock the baby a bit faster, a bit slower, until you have found the right rhythm. Slowly but surely you will learn to understand the language of crying.



How

crazy it may sound, you feel already like an experienced father.

You can change diapers with two fingers in your nose.

Many fathers take off the first two weeks after childbirth. This may mean that you are already be working this week. If you don't have a good feeling about it, and when you have the idea that you are more needed at home than at work, listen to that feeling. Take off for a few days more, report sick. In times of war and childbirth everything is allowed.

You will hear the entire birth story often. From the contractions through the dilatation, until the birthing stool. Your girlfriend goes on all the way, especially when she talks to another woman who gave birth not that long ago. It becomes a kind of game with complicated game rules, like an old English aristocratic sport played on a green lawn by men with beards, in white suits and a Celtic-like score. One mother had a complete dilatation and a cut, the other some kind of tong and a gap. One baby scored 3200 grams, the other a 2 for its muscle tone. Only mothers understand who won.

Don't get disturbed. A delivery is quite an experience and this is good for processing.