Okay, take a deep breath and now push! One, two, three...10.” We’ve seen it all before. Every delivery drama has shown us what to expect when you’re in labour but do you really know what’s heading your way when you’re wheeled into the delivery suite? If you don’t, you’re not alone at all and that’s where a prenatal class may come in useful.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

You’re pregnant! Now what? No idea what to expect in the next nine months and after? A prenatal class might be just the thing for you.

WORDS MELISSA ESPECKERMAN
What to Expect
The weeks are passing by faster than you can imagine and before you know it your precious bub will be snug in your arms. But before that happens, there’s a whole load of changes to expect – both emotional and physical.
Sure, you can search the internet or check out books for all the information you need but attending a prenatal class means you’re able to clarify information or raise any concerns you may have right there and then. “When I found out I was expecting there was no doubt in my mind that I would sign up for a prenatal class and I’m glad I did. When d-day came, it made knowing what was to come next a whole lot less frightening,” remembers Sally Lim, mother to three-month-old Dylan.
And the best part is you’ll get to meet other parents-to-be who are going through the same thing you are. What better way to really know that you’re not alone? “They let mums-to-be share feelings and ideas with others going through the same experience,” says Tan Guat Choo, senior lactation consultant, ParentCraft Centre, Gleneagles Hospital. Prenatal classes don’t just teach you techniques on how to cope with labour. In fact, it gets you up to speed on all you need to know about pregnancy, labour, birth and even early parenthood. “The prenatal classes go through physiological changes of pregnancy, common symptoms and signs during the trimesters of pregnancy, common problems in pregnancy, normal and abnormal labour progress, common interventions during labour, assisted vaginal delivery, Caesarean section, common exercises during labour, breathing techniques during labour, breastfeeding, tips on looking after baby,” states Dr Tony Tan, a specialist in Obstetrics & Gynaecology and consultant, Raffles Women’s Centre.
Classes are about to Begin
According to Kang Phaik Gaik, senior nurse manager and senior lactation consultant at Alvernia Parentcraft Centre, Mount Alvernia Hospital, the ideal time for an expectant woman to begin prenatal classes is from 20 weeks of gestation onwards. While you may start earlier if you wish, many don’t as the first trimester

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is commonly fraught with morning sickness, vomiting or even constant worry about miscarriage risks.

But it pays to start classes early. Many classes give you the low-down on what to expect early on in the pregnancy such as ante-partum haemorrhage and other minor discomforts. And should you experience any issues, you’ll know how to deal with it.

At Mother and Child, an education centre that offers prenatal and postnatal services and courses in Singapore, the Prenatal Childbirth Preparation class, will help mums-to-be make informed choices and the kind of birth experience they would want to have. Taught by qualified and experienced midwives, this is the centre’s most popular class.

**QUESTIONS PLEASE**

Here is a list of some questions you should ask before deciding on which class to attend.

- Is the instructor certified to teach childbirth classes?
- What is the instructor’s philosophy about labour and birth?
- What topics will be covered in the classes?
- How will my partner be involved? Will he learn to play an active role in labour and birth?
- How much is the course and how long will it run for?
- How often will the class meet?
- How big is the class? Is there a limit to the number of couples attending?
- Will we be introduced to various birth philosophies?

**Not Just for Mummies**

Of course, the classes aren’t just designed for the mummies to be. Daddies are just as important and need to be involved as well. Having a baby brings about physical, emotional and lifestyle changes that many may not realise. “This better prepares them to manage and cope with the changes once the baby arrives,” says Tan.

Leon Foo was one such dad who attended a six-week class with his wife. “As a dad, I of course, was worried about how to handle the baby when she arrived while my wife didn’t seem the least bit anxious about bringing a newborn baby home. I was prepared for the many emotional outbursts that were to be expected when it came to my wife but a baby is a whole other thing. When would my paternal instincts kick in?” shares Leon, who now considers himself a pro when it comes to taking care of and pampering his 18-month-old daughter.

“In addition, having adequate knowledge about newborns and the proper way to look after them would help increase the confidence of the parents, allowing them to focus their attention on bonding with the baby and enjoying the precious experience of parenthood,” continues Tan.

But dads aren’t the only ones seen at these classes. Mothers and mothers-in-law are just some of the birth companions welcomed at the Antenatal and Parentcraft Programme at National University Hospital.

Still deciding if prenatal classes are the right choice for you? I say, if it helps you deal with any worry you might be feeling, why not? “Awaiting the arrival of the baby can cause unnecessary anxiety and apprehension. Knowing what to expect and what to do will greatly ease the couple’s anxiety and boost their confidence as they go through the pregnancy and delivery,” says Kang.
Prenatal Classes

Wondering where to find a prenatal class that’s right for you? Check out our list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO. OF SESSIONS</th>
<th>SCHEDULE</th>
<th>CLASS SIZE</th>
<th>FEE</th>
<th>RECOMMENDED TIME TO START PROGRAMME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National University Hospital</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Saturday classes: 9.00 am to 11.00 am, 11.30 am to 1.30 pm, 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm</td>
<td>Maximum of 13 couples</td>
<td>$192.60 for NUH patients $224.70 for non-NUH patients (inclusive of GST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Weekday class: 6.30 pm to 8.15 pm Weekend class: 9.00 am to 10.45 am, or 11.15 am to 1.00 pm</td>
<td>Maximum of 12 couples</td>
<td>KKH patients: $150 (weekday), $180 (weekend) Non-KKH patients: $200 (weekday), $230 (weekend) (inclusive of GST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Alvernia Hospital</td>
<td>6 + 1 complimentary Marriage Enrichment session</td>
<td>Weekday classes: 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm Weekend classes: 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm or 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm</td>
<td>Maximum of 15 couples</td>
<td>MAH patients: $181.90 (weekday), $203.30 (weekend) Non-MAH patients: $214 (weekday), $235.40 (weekend) (inclusive of GST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Elizabeth Hospital</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Weekday classes: 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm Weekend classes: 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm</td>
<td>Maximum of 12 couples</td>
<td>$321 (weekday), $428 (weekend) (inclusive of GST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gleneagles Hospital</td>
<td>4 (weekday) 3 (weekend) complimentary Five Love Languages session</td>
<td>Weekday classes: 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm Weekend classes: 9.00 am to 11.00 am</td>
<td>Maximum of 25 couples (weekday), 10 couples (weekend)</td>
<td>$280 (weekday), $320 (weekend) (inclusive of GST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkway East Hospital</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Weekend classes: Available from 2.00 pm</td>
<td>Maximum of 10 couples</td>
<td>$256.80 (inclusive of GST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore General Hospital</td>
<td>8 (1 month)</td>
<td>Weekday classes: Saturdays (with nurses and dietitians) Wednesdays (with physiotherapists) both run from 6.00 pm to 8.30 pm (no weekend classes)</td>
<td>Maximum of 14 couples</td>
<td>Subsidised patients: $211.62 Private patients: $221.39 Non-Residents: $265.66 (inclusive of GST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raffles Hospital</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tuesdays: 6.30 pm to 8.00 pm</td>
<td>Maximum of 15 couples</td>
<td>$179.75 (inclusive of GST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson Medical Centre</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Monday-Friday: 7.00 pm to 9.00 pm Saturday &amp; Sunday: Available from 10.00 am Conveniently held at various training centres</td>
<td>Maximum of 30 couples</td>
<td>From $250 depending on weekday or weekend classes (inclusive of GST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother and Child</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday: 7.00 pm to 9.00 pm Saturday: 11.00 am to 1.00 pm</td>
<td>Maximum of 9 couples</td>
<td>$480, $580 (with one home visit) (inclusive of GST)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Information is correct at time of print April 2013