**FACT SHEET**

**Dads & Depression**

**KEY POINTS**

- One in 10 fathers will experience postpartum depression or anxiety.\(^2,^3,^4,^5,^6,^7\)
- Depression and anxiety are two times as common in expecting and new fathers, compared with global estimates in men.\(^5\)
- The peak incidence of postpartum depression in fathers is 3-6 months.\(^5\)
- The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) has been validated for detecting paternal depression, but with lower cut-off scores.\(^3\)
- Men suffering depression often exhibit higher levels of irritability and anger.\(^6\)
- Fathers suffering postpartum depression report lower levels of affection and higher levels of criticism both toward and from their partner.\(^6\)

**CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS**\(^4,^5,^7\)

- Change in hormones
- Stress of having a new baby in the household
- Adjusting to new and demanding roles and tasks
- Feelings excluded from mother-infant bonding
- Lack of social supports and network
- Maternal depression
- Hostility and conflict in the home, particularly with spouse/partner\(^1,^6\)
- Children’s behavioral and conduct problems\(^4,^6\)
- Lack of a good role model and rewards
- Difficulties in developing attachment with infant
- Higher levels of positive parenting by a non-depressed adult can lessen the impact of parental depression on the child.\(^1\)

**IMPACTS OF PATERNAL DEPRESSION**

**INCREASES**

- Negative parenting\(^2\), including harsh discipline practices (such as spanking or corporal punishment)
- Hostility and conflict in the home, particularly with spouse/partner\(^1,^6\)
- Children’s behavioral and conduct problems\(^4,^6\)

**DECREASES**

- Positive parenting\(^2\), including sensitivity or warmth, and practices such as reading to children.
- Lack of a good role model and rewards

**TREATMENT**

To treat paternal depression, recommendations include:

- Adequate sleep, exercise, nutrition
- Social support
- Talk therapy
- Medication

*This fact sheet was supported by a grant from the California Health Care Foundation*

---

SUPPORT FOR DADS/PARTNERS

Beyond The Blues (by Shoshanna Bennet, PhD, and Pec Indman, EdD, MFT) devotes an entire chapter to supporting partners. Text of the chapter is available at: bit.ly/beyond-blues

The Postpartum Husband (by Karen Kleiman, MSW). This concise book provides insights for fathers / partners / spouses who are also experiencing depression or anxiety. bit.ly/postpartumhub

The Postpartum Support International has a full page of resources for dads and partners, including:
- Dads Coordinator
- Weekly chats for dads
- Monthly support group for fathers
bit.ly/dad-support

Boot Camp for New Dads is a father-to-father, community-based website that equips men to engage with their infants, support their mates and navigate their transformation into dads.
bootcampfornewdads.org

Basic Training for New Dads offers virtual classes where participants connect with other expectant dads and talk with a “veteran dad” who has been through the class.
bit.ly/menexcel

Postpartum Men is a place for men with concerns about depression, anxiety or other problems with mood after the birth of a child. It includes a self-assessment for postpartum depression and an online forum for dads.
postpartummen.com

AUSTRALIA’S PROGRAM FOR NEW DADS

SMS4dads is a program in Australia that provides new and soon-to-be-dads with useful messages and tips matched to their baby’s age. SMS4dads sends three texts per week with tips and information about infant development to fathers’ phones from 16 weeks into the pregnancy until the baby is 12 months old.

How it works: SMS4dads uses the ‘voice’ of the baby to deliver messages that are synchronised with the development of the fetus and baby. The messages—which focus on interacting with a new baby, supporting mothers, and staying healthy—are brief but have links to further online information.

Success rate: Over 90% of fathers report that the messages helped in their transition to becoming a father. Here’s what fathers say about this program:

When other people tell me what to do, that doesn’t really work for me, but when the message came from my baby asking me to read to her—well, what could I do? The texts were a great conversation starter with my wife, I forwarded quite a few through to her. The way the messages would pop up and sometimes the timing was just right to give you a boost or a smile amidst everything—like a mate tapping you on the shoulder. Just wanted to say “thanks” for this project. The text messages have been invaluable and I couldn’t have known just how important and how much I needed to receive these short and helpful messages.

Learn more at sms4dads.com