

# Dads mental health and wellbeing as a new or expecting parent

## Pregnancy and parenting can be stressful. Dads need support too.

Up to 1 in 10 expecting and new dads experience perinatal anxiety and depression. Mental health concerns can affect:

- Your wellbeing
- How you feel about being a dad
- Your bond with your baby
- Your relationships

Talking to someone can help you adjust to fatherhood and really enjoy life with your new baby.

## You don't have to manage alone

Chat to a mate or someone who has had a similar experience.

Speak to a doctor about getting professional support or a mental health plan.

Join a dads' group (online or in person)



## What to look and listen for

Common signs of mental health challenges for dads:

- Feeling numb, frustrated, sad, isolated and lonely.
- Physical symptoms of stress and anxiety like headaches, muscle tension.
- Less interest in things you usually enjoy.
- Changes to appetite and sleep.
- Fear of looking after your baby or avoiding caring for them.
- Feeling rejected when your partner focuses on baby.
- Changes to libido/sexual function.
- Using alcohol or drugs to 'escape' or cope.
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

The PANDA Helpline can also help you find the right supports for you and your family.





## Nick's story

"Looking back, the biggest thing was having that first phone call. That really helped shatter the illusion for me that I had to keep it all together, that I had to be a perfect dad.

I think my biggest fear is to be seen as weak or exposed for not knowing what to do. It's amazing how powerful it is to be told it's OK to take off the mask and the body armour."



Find more resources for dads:



## Matt's tips

- Talk it out!
- Fill your bucket with love and be around people who bring you up, not pull you down.
- Don't be afraid to walk away from relationships or friendships that leave you feeling drained.
- Find like-minded communities online to workshop your emotions.
- Utilise therapy (mental health care plans are incredible).
- If the counsellor you are seeing isn't the right fit for you, find someone who is.
- Most important of all, be kind to yourself.

## PANDA Helpline

The **PANDA Helpline** provides counselling, referral and peer support from parents who have been through similar challenges.

- When someone calls, you will speak with a counsellor or peer worker who understands the challenges of being a new or expecting parent.
- PANDA counsellors and peer workers listen with kindness and compassion, help you explore support options, and can also provide information about appropriate specialist services.
- **If you are concerned for someone's safety**, it's vital that you seek immediate help by contacting either a local acute mental health service or your nearest hospital's emergency department.
- You can also contact PANDA for advice and support. If you believe that someone's life is at immediate risk, call 000.

 PANDA National Helpline 1300 726 306 | Monday - Saturday

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