

## **HOW ARE YOU DAD?**

### **Having A Baby? Congratulations!**

Having a baby can be a wonderful and fulfilling time in your life. For some it can also be overwhelming, isolating, and unsettling.

### **Did You Know?**

Dads can experience symptoms of postnatal depression.

**1 in 10 fathers suffer from postnatal depression**

### **What's Happening?**

Any period of change can be challenging, especially when there are so many expectations that seem to fall on your shoulders.

You're likely to find that in pregnancy and around birth, Mum is the priority. You may feel ignored, shut out, and lacking support from those around you – including professionals. It might feel like everything is about Mum and you might feel pressure to support her, even if you don't feel great yourself.

Like women, fathers can experience some temporary hormonal changes as they transition to parenthood. These hormones are designed to help you bond with your baby but, unlike Mum, these changes won't happen during pregnancy. You may have to wait a bit longer to feel a strong connection to your baby. This can leave you feeling a bit deflated, even though the relationship you'll form with your baby is unique and every bit as valuable.

It's important to recognise that some of the changes when you have a baby affect both of you, though you may show it in different ways. Sleepless nights, worrying about your baby, and adapting to parenthood can create stress; maybe even impacting your relationship and making you feel isolated.

### **Should I Seek Support?**

Everyone reacts differently to their feelings and can show them in different ways. Life changes when you have a baby, and it can be difficult to try to balance your old life with the new. The expectation of having a baby can differ from the reality. This can feel overwhelming, making you feel low or flat in mood. Your sleep and appetite can suffer which may then worsen these feelings.

You may be trying to process what you experienced during birth; it can be difficult to see your partner in pain and feel like you can't help. If you're finding this is weighing heavily on your mind, it can help to talk.

If you find you're not enjoying things that you used to, or lacking motivation, then reach out for support. It can be quite common for people to avoid situations which feel difficult, so if you're finding reasons to stay out of the house more often it could also be time to speak up. Remember, bonding with a baby isn't instant, but if you're finding you feel guilty for not spending time with your baby, speaking to others might help.

Tiredness and guilt can also lead you to become irritable or withdrawn. Finding help in the early stages of these feelings can help prevent them from impacting your life.

## What Can Help?

Recognising your feelings and talking about them can help you to know that you're not alone.

Being as involved as possible in the antenatal period can also help, so think about attending pregnancy classes together, or using the **Baby Buddy** app, which has a version for Dads, updating you on how pregnancy is progressing.

Your Health Visitor can offer information on local groups, and the **Just One Norfolk** website has a wealth of information on what to expect in pregnancy and beyond.

## Need Support?

The **Wellbeing** service can provide counselling and psychotherapy and has a dedicated perinatal pathway that prioritises partners. You can self-refer to this service, making sure to mention that you are either expecting, or have recently had a baby, at: [www.wellbeingnands.co.uk](http://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk)

Your **GP** can refer you for talking therapies and offer advice around medication that could help.

## Need To Talk?

**PANDAS** provide support with mental health during pregnancy and beyond.

Their free helpline is available 11am-10pm every day on 0808 1961 776. They have also launched support groups for Dads which take place virtually over Zoom once a week. More information is available at [pandasfoundation.org.uk](http://pandasfoundation.org.uk) and can be found under 'Online Support Groups'

**CALM** offer a webchat service each evening from 5pm to midnight: [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

'**Mind**' can help you to find the right support in your area – their Infoline is 0300 123 3393

## Need To Know You're Not Alone?

@**mffonline** is an online community that shares other partner's experiences of pregnancy, birth and parenting. They also host a podcast called Daddy Debates, which can be helpful company in the early hours.

**Dadsnet.com** is an online community with a closed group of over 20,000 which can be found by searching 'Dadsnet' on Facebook. They also host podcasts, including 'How to Be a Dad', which is an informative and often light-hearted guide to parenthood.

## Want To Know More?

The **Fatherhood Institute** have a wealth of information and additional resources in their 'Becoming Dad' booklet if you need to understand more – you can request a PDF download of this on the following link: [Becoming Dad \(mailchi.mp\)](https://mailchi.mp/fatherhoodinstitute/)

