



Is pregnancy or early parenthood making you sad or anxious?

Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia
National Helpline 1300 726 306

PANDA's National Helpline provides specialist perinatal emotional and mental health support to anyone during pregnancy and early parenthood, including partners and family members.

panda.org.au | howisdadgoing.org.au



panda how is dad going program

Victorian father of three, Scott, was well aware of postnatal depression but never knew it was something that could happen to men. After a traumatic birth with his third child he worked hard to hide his true feelings, unaware that he was actually going through an illness he had previously only associated with women.

"I worked determinedly to build that façade... Self-obsession became the norm as I worked to 'fix things'. My face aches agonisingly when I recall the falsest of smiles I forced on myself. Worse still, I can now see that I tried to force a similar smile on my poor partner's face," said Scott.

"While I see myself as a strong advocate and enabler of women's rights and empowerment, I still can't escape the connection of being 'traditionally male' and seeing myself as holding primary responsibility for being the provider and

protector for all in my family. I can now see that a trigger for my depression is when I fail in that role and see those around me struggling."

"One of the things we hear a lot from dads on PANDA's National Helpline is that they feel guilty about their feelings of depression and or anxiety when their partner has been through all the physical process of pregnancy and giving birth..."

According to Terri Smith, CEO of PANDA – Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia, what Scott was feeling is not uncommon. ▶▶



» “One of the things we hear a lot from dads on PANDA’s National Helpline is that they feel guilty about their feelings of depression and or anxiety when their partner has been through all the physical process of pregnancy and giving birth. Most men want to be seen as a good father and partner. They want to be there to support their partner rather than needing help themselves. But no one can help being sick – and this is an illness.”

“It is natural to experience a degree of worry and ‘ups and downs’ when transitioning to parenthood,” said Smith. “Becoming a parent is a huge life transition for both mum and dad, with a whole range of new responsibilities, and no-one does well with limited sleep. However, we say to men that if symptoms persist for more than two weeks and impact on your daily life it is time to reach out for support. It is important to know that it is OK to ask for help and that you are not alone.”

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It is now recognised that around 1 in 20 men experience depression during pregnancy (antenatal); and up to 1 in 10 new dads struggle with depression following the birth of their baby (postnatal).

Symptoms of perinatal anxiety and depression in men can vary, but may include:

- Constant tiredness or exhaustion
- Ongoing headache and high physical stress levels e.g. muscle tension
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies that previously brought joy
- Changes in appetite
- Sleep problems (unrelated to baby’s sleep)
- Ongoing irritability, anger or moodiness
- Emotional withdrawal from your partner, baby, family, friends
- Fear of caring for baby
- Not wanting to communicate with your partner, family and friends
- Feeling isolated
- Using alcohol or drugs to ‘escape’ or cope.

Getting Support

For men experiencing perinatal anxiety and depression, the first step in help-seeking is often the hardest. Visiting the PANDA website – panda.org.au or howisdadgoing.org.au might help you understand what is going on.

Secondly, it is usually best to see a health professional or person that understands the perinatal period (GP, maternal child health nurse, midwife) to provide you with treatment and support.

You can also call the PANDA National Helpline – 1300 726 306 (M-F 10AM-5PM AEST).

PANDA’s National Helpline counsellors speak with expecting and new parents every day – including men – about the challenges of managing anxiety/depression during pregnancy or with a baby. ●

PANDA – Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia is a specialist not for profit organisation that has been raising awareness of antenatal and postnatal depression for over 30 years and has helped tens of thousands of Australians get vital information, support and treatment to aid their recovery. PANDA operates Australia’s only National Helpline for women, men and families struggling with perinatal anxiety and depression.