

Understanding Paternal Mental Health During Pregnancy and Postpartum

Recognize changes. Understand support options. Plan your next step.

● What is paternal perinatal mental health?

Paternal perinatal mental health refers to a father's emotional and psychological well-being during a partner's pregnancy and after a baby arrives. Some fathers experience depression, anxiety, or other distress during this transition. Experiences differ, and not every emotional change indicates a mental health condition.

● What might someone notice?

Possible changes include persistent sadness or anxiety, irritability, loss of interest in usual activities, difficulty concentrating, sleep or appetite changes beyond expected disruptions, feeling disconnected, or difficulty adjusting to new responsibilities. Symptoms can overlap with stress, sleep loss, and other health concerns. A qualified professional can help assess what is happening.

● What can influence well-being?

Research has identified associations between paternal depressive symptoms and factors such as prior mental health concerns, relationship stress, financial strain, limited support, and depression in a partner. An association does not mean any one factor causes depression or that a particular family will experience it.

● What kinds of support are available?

Professional care

An appointment with a primary care clinician or mental health professional to discuss symptoms and possible assessment.

Counseling and peers

Counseling, peer groups, or other supportive services, depending on needs and preferences.

Everyday support

Practical household planning, communication with trusted people, and opportunities for rest when possible. These may complement—but do not replace—professional care when needed.

● Questions families may consider

- How long have these changes been happening, and are they affecting daily activities or relationships?
- Who could provide practical or emotional support?
- Would a conversation with a healthcare professional be useful?

Important: Paternal mental health deserves consideration alongside maternal and infant well-being. No single reaction to parenthood applies to everyone.

If you or someone you know is in emotional crisis, call or text 988. For immediate danger, call 911.
Support contacts are on page 2.



My Well-Being & Support Plan

Use this printable page for personal reflection or to prepare for a conversation. It is not a diagnostic screening tool.

1 Changes or experiences I want to understand

What have I noticed about my mood, energy, sleep, stress, or relationships?

2 What support might be useful?

- ☐ Someone to talk with
- ☐ Time for rest or a break
- ☐ Help with meals, errands, or childcare
- ☐ A conversation with a health professional
- ☐ A peer support group
- ☐ Something else: _____

3 Questions I may want to ask

- ☐ Could these changes be related to stress, depression, anxiety, or another concern?
- ☐ What evaluation or support options are available?
- ☐ What can I do if symptoms continue or become more difficult?

My additional questions:

4 My next step

Person or service I may contact:

Action I choose to take:

Follow-up date (optional):

Support and crisis contacts: three different services

● PSI HelpLine

Postpartum Support International Helpline: call or text **1-800-944-4773** for support and resource connections. **It is not an emergency or crisis line.** You can leave a message, and a trained volunteer returns your call or text. Spanish speakers can press 1 when calling or text 971-203-7773.

◆ 988

For immediate emotional crisis support in the U.S., **call or text 988.**

▲ 911

Call 911 for immediate danger.

Trusted resources

JAMA — What Is Paternal Perinatal Depression?

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2838504>

Postpartum Support International — Help for Dads

<https://postpartum.net/get-help/help-for-dads/>

CDC — Mental Health Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/mental-health/caring/>

Explore further with OH FAMILY

<https://www.ohfamilyinc.org>

About this guide

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Disclosure: This guide provides general educational information, not a diagnosis, medical advice, or a substitute for mental health treatment. Symptoms, needs, and resources vary. If concerns are persistent, worsening, or affect daily life, consider speaking with a qualified health professional. For immediate danger, call 911; for a mental health crisis in the United States, call or text 988.