



Integrated Early Years Service



**Camden Sure Start**  
Your journey. Our support.

# Dads' Mental Health

Pregnancy and the first year – information for dads, mums and carers

Feelings of anxiety and depression are very common in fathers but sadly, this is not widely recognised, just as post-natal depression (PND) was not widely recognised in mothers 20 years ago.

Having a new baby and making the transition to parenthood is equally challenging for fathers and mothers. It is important that Dads look after themselves too and if you do feel low or anxious remember this is very common and it will help if you talk to someone.

For the best start for you and your baby, join the Bump to Baby group and prepare for becoming a parent.

## The most common reasons for fathers feeling anxious, low in mood or depressed are<sup>1</sup>:

**Maternal depression** e.g. Mum is feeling low, anxious, baby blues

**Poor social support** e.g. Dad is isolated, has little emotional support from friends or family



## Fathers' mental health — FACTS

- It is common for Dads to experience some anxiety, stress and depression during pregnancy and after the baby is born<sup>2</sup>
- If a Dad is feeling anxious or low during pregnancy then he is more likely to experience depression after the birth<sup>3</sup>
- 16% of men experience anxiety before the baby is born and up to 18% after the birth<sup>4</sup>
- A study in 2010 found on average 11% of fathers were depressed in pregnancy and after the birth<sup>5</sup>



## Pregnancy is a demanding time for men as they come to terms with being a father

- Labour and birth is a very emotional time for Dads
- More than 1 in 3 new fathers (38%) are concerned about their mental health
- Untreated severe depression in fathers is associated with emotional and behavioural problems in children by 3.5 years, particularly in boys<sup>6</sup>
- Children with two depressed parents are at a higher risk of poor development<sup>7</sup>

1 Boyce et al 2007, Castle et al 2008  
2 Figueiredo and Conde, 2011

3 Ramchandani et al, 2008  
4 Leach et al, 2016

5 Paulson & Bazemore, 2010  
6 Ramchandani et al, 2005

7 Brennan et al 2002

## Why fathers matter<sup>8</sup>

Fathers who care for and play with their babies, make a huge difference to their child's growth, development and confidence e.g.

- Higher self-esteem and life satisfaction
- Higher educational achievement
- Better relationships with friends
- Greater capacity for empathy
- More satisfying adult sexual partnerships
- Better career opportunities and higher earnings compared with their parents
- Lower adolescent risk behaviour and criminality

**Fathers, like mothers, produce hormones that help them bond with their baby; the more care you do, the more hormones you will produce:**

**Vasopressin:** higher in fathers of young children (helps response to infant cries to comfort baby)

**Prolactin:** (the 'breastfeeding hormone'): highest among experienced fathers and promotes closeness and care (response to babies cues)

**Oxytocin:** (the 'love hormone'): higher levels through extended contact with baby, encourages closeness and care (effect of give and take)

**Testosterone:** reduces levels of testosterone and the potential for angry responses

## Mental health fact...

Sensitive support from baby's father (such as empathy and emotional support to mum) is strongly associated with lower rates of depression in mothers. For mothers on their own, they can receive this support from family and friends.<sup>9</sup>

Dad, if you feel low, talk to your GP.

## Did you know?

Mothers who experience baby blues, PND or are feeling low are more likely than fathers to turn to their partners for support or friends/family.

<sup>8</sup> Genesoni and Tallandini, 2009

<sup>9</sup> Fatherhood Institute, 2018



# Help for Dads

## The Camden Parents' Wellbeing Service

A team offering therapy to parents who are Camden residents or parents with a GP in Camden.

07795 968 949 / 020 3317 6670 — [cpws@candi.nhs.uk](mailto:cpws@candi.nhs.uk)

## Children's Centres for Dads, Mums and Carers with Children from Pregnancy to Age 5

Contact your local children's centre, join a bump to baby group or ask to speak to a family worker.

020 7974 8961 — [camdensurestart@camden.gov.uk](mailto:camdensurestart@camden.gov.uk)

## MIND in Camden

Working alongside people of all ages who are experiencing mental ill health.

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

# Information for Dads

## Fathers Reaching Out

...was set up by Mark Williams who is campaigning to raise awareness around anxiety/depression experienced by Dads from pregnancy through to after the baby is born. He has set up a website called Fathers Reaching Out.

[reachingoutpmh.co.uk](http://reachingoutpmh.co.uk)

## Dad Info

...website specifically for fathers and run by Family Matters Institute. It is a registered UK charity, offering helpful, practical and entertaining resources for fathers.

[www.dad.info](http://www.dad.info)

## The Dad Network

...helpful facts, support, videos and parenting tips.

[thedadnetwork.co.uk](http://thedadnetwork.co.uk)



Find out more:

[camden.gov.uk/camdensurestart](http://camden.gov.uk/camdensurestart)