

Just for New Dads

INSIDE:

Role of the New Dad

Sex After Baby

Recognizing Postpartum
Mood Disorder

Help for Dad and Mom


York Region

 Ontario





Just for
New Dads

Role of the New Dad

Becoming a new dad is an exciting and challenging time of life. You may feel this way whether this is your first child or your third. So many changes occur within the family. Mom and dad will be learning how to take care of baby and how to take care of each other's needs. Dad's workload will increase as well as mom's. Don't worry, with time things will get easier.

Your role as "dad" is important. Dads need to allow themselves time to learn how to be a parent. You will develop your own way of taking care of the baby and that is good. Parenting means mothering **and** fathering.

Common Challenges for Dad

It is normal to have financial worries with the arrival of a new baby.

- Try to have a plan and budget in place
- Take advantage of coupons and sales
- Take advantage of free services (e.g., parenting workshops, family drop-in centres)





Common Challenges for Dad

Expect temporary changes to your sexual relationship.

- Think of how mom may be feeling:
 - Mom may be sore and tired
 - Mom may not feel sexy
 - Mom may be afraid of getting pregnant again
 - Sex may be the last thing on her mind
- Talk to your partner, without pressure
- Cuddle, hold hands or relax together if mom is willing
- Remember, with time things will get better

Avoid frustration and confusion by communicating with your partner.

- Listen to your partner
- Clarify what mom is saying to make sure you understand
- Be open and honest
- Discuss concerns, feelings and/or worries
- Discuss with mom what she needs and when she needs it
- Take time out to calm down if you are feeling frustrated
- Realize you think differently than mom and that is okay
- Allow yourself to say “being a parent is difficult”

How Dad Can Help Himself

It is normal to have an increased sense of responsibility and self-doubt. Dad, before you can help others, you have to take care of yourself.

- Do things for yourself outside of work: exercise, read
- Talk to other fathers and friends
- Accept help from friends and family: meals, laundry, yardwork, babysitting
- Try to plan ahead and organize; but be flexible
- Trust your instincts
- Call *Health Connection* 1-800-361-5653, TTY 1-866-252-9933 or speak to your doctor
- Ask for help when you feel overwhelmed
- See support for families (page 10)

How Dad Can Help Mom

- Help mom sleep:
 - Limit visitors
 - Turn off the ringer on the phone
- Help with household chores:
 - Cooking, cleaning, laundry and more
- Keep older children occupied or out with a friend or family
- Provide encouragement and support:
 - Tell her she is doing a good job
 - Ask mom about her needs often





When Things Don't Seem Right

Some women experience a postpartum mood disorder after the birth of a child. Often it is dad who is the first one to recognize that something is wrong. A postpartum mood disorder (PPMD) is one of the most common complications after pregnancy. It can be mild or severe. All mothers are different. The earlier mom gets help, the better for everyone. She will get better, but it may take some time.

Definition – Postpartum Mood Disorders

Postpartum mood disorders are mental health disorders that affect women within the first year of having a baby. They include the baby blues, postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis.

The Baby Blues

- Affects up to 80% of new moms*
- Occurs within 3 to 5 days after childbirth
- Improves within 1 to 2 weeks
- Does not require medical attention
- Includes symptoms like crying, irritability, difficulty sleeping

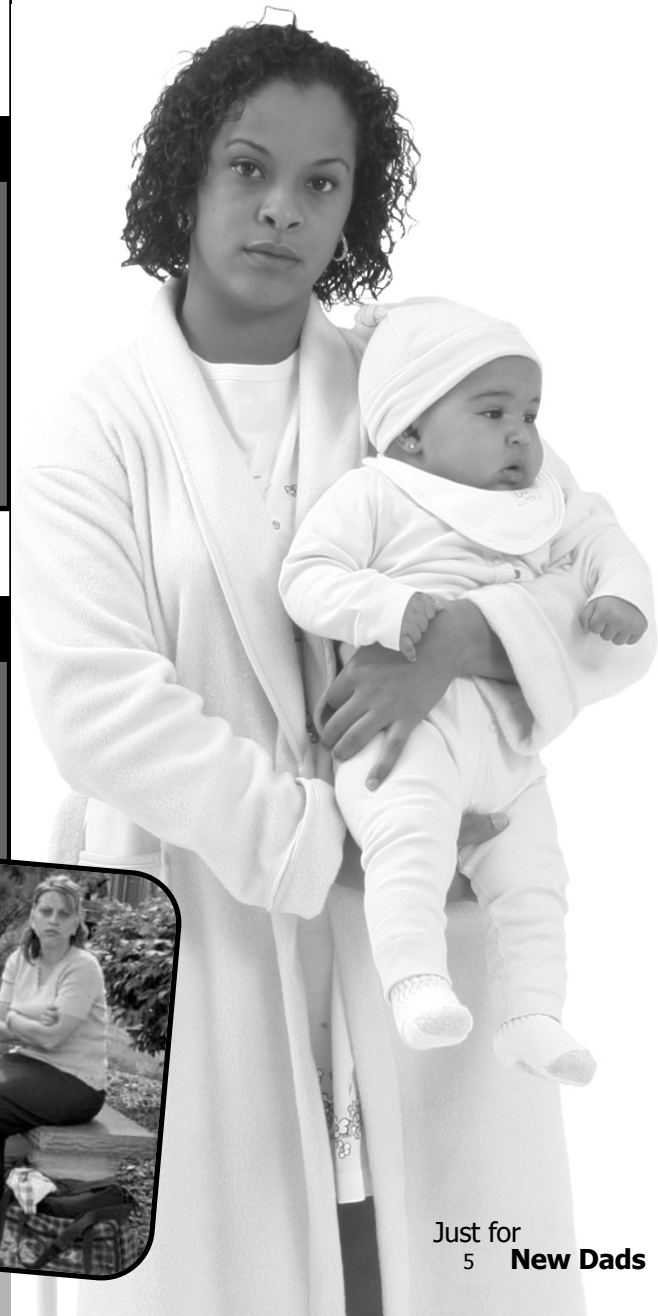
Postpartum Depression

- Affects 10-15% of new moms*
- Occurs within 1 year after childbirth
- May start suddenly or slowly and lasts longer than two weeks
- Includes symptoms like the baby blues (but more intense), as well as change in appetite, anxiety, lack of feelings for the baby

Postpartum Psychosis

- Occurs in 1 to 2 of 1,000 births*
- Is the least common, but most serious PPMD
- Requires immediate medical attention
- Includes symptoms like hallucinations, paranoia, problems with reality

For more symptoms of PPMD
see the checklist on page 11





What a PPMD Might Look Like

Example 1 Mom tells dad that everything is okay and he believes her. Everyday he comes home to a spotless house. Supper is made and on the table. She is exercising and busy taking care of the baby. When mom hits rock bottom, dad is shocked to see how well she has hidden her symptoms.

Example 2 Mom says she is not feeling like herself. She doesn't seem to be very motivated to take care of herself. She stays in the same clothes for days and doesn't want to take a shower. She lies on the couch for hours.

Example 3 Mom doesn't want to spend time with the baby. She takes care of the baby's basic needs and passes the baby off to whomever she can. When she does spend time with the baby, she is not happy.

Example 4 Mom wants to do everything for the baby herself. She doesn't let visitors hold the new baby and even has a hard time letting dad have a chance. She checks on the baby every few minutes, day and night. Mom is constantly worried about germs and viruses.

Example 5 Mom gets extremely angry at every little thing: the way dishes were put away, the way the laundry was folded and the way the baby's diaper was changed. Dad is doing more than his share around the house to help mom, but it is not good enough. Dad feels as if he needs to tiptoe quietly around the house so that he will not upset mom.

How PPMD Affects the Family

The baby blues will not cause any long-term effects, but postpartum depression and psychosis can. Postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis may affect how mom and baby interact with each other, may cause behaviour problems in older children and may cause or increase problems between mom and dad.

Attitudes Toward Mental Illness

You may have a difficult time dealing with your partner's PPMD if you don't know much about mental illness. *A postpartum mood disorder can happen to any new mom.* Your attitude towards mental illness will affect your partner's recovery. It is important to accept that your partner's PPMD is real. Talk to friends, family or a health professional about your feelings (e.g., anger, confusion, fear etc.). They can often provide the support and understanding you need.

How Dad Can Help Mom With a PPMD

All women benefit from extra help when they have a new baby. You can do all the things mentioned previously; however, women with a PPMD need much more support.

- Don't expect her to "snap out of it"
- Help her get a medical assessment
- Seek counselling for mom (see page 10)
- Be involved with your partner's treatment





- Do as much for mom and baby as you can
- Hire help: nanny, babysitter, housekeeper, postpartum doula
- Don't take mom's PPMD personally (it's not her fault or yours)
- Ask mom frequently how you can help her; the support she wants may change over time

Provide encouraging words

"I love you"

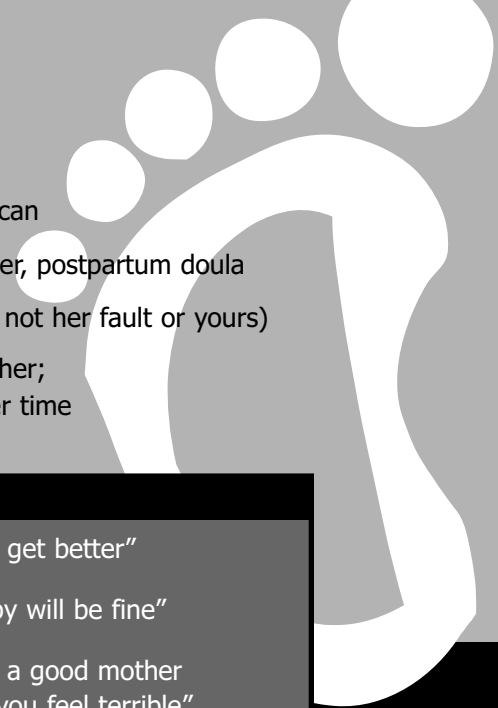
"You will get better"

"It's not your fault"

"Our baby will be fine"

"We'll get through this together"

"You are a good mother even if you feel terrible"



Dad Needs Help Too

- Be aware of how you are feeling; men can experience postpartum depression too
- Make sure you are taking care of yourself
- Join a men's group (see page 10)
- Consider counselling for yourself (see page 10)

Where to Get Help

Immediate Medical Attention

Seek immediate medical help if you think mom could harm herself or the baby OR if you think she is experiencing hallucinations, paranoia or problems with reality.

Community Crisis Response Service

24 hour crisis line: 310-COPE (2673)

Area code 905 NOT required

Hospital Emergency Department

9-1-1: telephone number to report an emergency situation

Medical Assessment

Seek medical help if mom feels helpless, alone and believes things will not get better.

- *Physicians – Family Doctor,
Obstetrician & Gynecologist
Pediatrician*
- *Walk-in Clinics
Urgent Care Centres
Community Care Access Centre (CCAC)*



Where to Get Help

Counselling

Studies have shown that medical treatment, counselling and support have the best results.

Family Doctor: cost covered by OHIP

General Practice Psychotherapy Association: cost covered by OHIP

Psychiatrist: cost covered by OHIP

Psychologist: fee for service

Social Worker: service fee will vary depending on agency or if in private practice

Family Life Centres: located in Markham, Richmond Hill, Newmarket and Georgina: sliding fee based on income

Employee Assistance Program(EAP): counselling services are paid by employer



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Support for Families

York Region Community and Health Services Health Connection

A phone line to access a Public Health Nurse Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

1-800-361-5653, TTY 1-866-252-9933

Call for **telephone support** and access programs including:
Prenatal and Parenting Classes
Breastfeeding Clinics
Home Visiting Program
Postpartum Mood Disorder Support & Education Groups

Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers: www.therose.ca

Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYC): programs for families
www.ontarioearlyyears.ca

All Babies Count Prenatal Nutrition Program: weekly drop in program for pregnant women

Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) Good Beginnings - A Parent and Infant Support Volunteer Program

For Dads

Focus on Fathers:

1-800-263-2075

Father Involvement Initiative

www.cfii.ca/fiion

Postpartum Men

www.postpartummen.com



Information on Postpartum Mood Disorders

Best Start, Ontario's Maternal, Infant and Child Development Resource Centre:
www.lifewithnewbaby.ca

Pacific Post Partum Support Society:
www.postpartum.org

Our Sisters' Place:
www.oursistersplace.ca

Postpartum Support International:
www.postpartum.net

Symptom Checklist

Read through the list below and check off any symptoms that your partner has been experiencing. Ask your partner to complete the checklist too. You can bring this checklist to your family physician or health care provider.

- Irritability
 - Frustration
 - Tiredness
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Feelings of being overwhelmed
 - Anxiety
 - Changes in appetite
 - Lack of feelings for baby
 - Panic attacks
 - Obsessive thoughts
 - Racing thoughts
 - Strange behaviour
 - Fear or thoughts of hurting oneself or the baby
- ◆ "Out of control feelings"
 - ◆ Hallucinations (hearing things or seeing things)
 - ◆ Paranoia
 - ◆ Problems with reality
 - ◆ Other _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - ◆ These symptoms require immediate medical attention.



References:

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Douglas, A. (2000). *The mother of all pregnancy books: an all-Canadian guide to conception, birth, and everything in between*. Toronto, Canada: Macmillan.

*Ross, L. E., Dennis, C-L., Blackmore, E. R., & Stewart, D. E. (2005). *Postpartum depression: A guide for front-line health and social service providers*. Toronto, Canada: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2005). *Depression during and after pregnancy*. October 14, 2005, from www.4woman.gov/faq/postpartum.htm





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