



Welcome to Parenthood



GidgetFoundationAustralia
Supporting the emotional wellbeing of expectant & new parents








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Emotional Wellbeing

The arrival of a new baby brings joy along with challenges. Pregnancy and early parenting are unique experiences, often filled with mixed emotions. Gidget Foundation Australia aims to promote a community where parents are supported, nurtured and valued.

The journey to parenthood is a time of great change and adjustment for everyone. Caring for our emotional health is as important as looking after our physical health.

Some ideas to help maintain emotional wellbeing include:

 <p>Eat well and stay active</p>	 <p>Make time for yourself and your partner</p>
 <p>Stay connected with friends and work colleagues</p>	 <p>Develop new friendships with parents</p>
 <p>Take time out when you need it</p>	 <p>Understand triggers that create stress. Learn to further develop your coping skills</p>
 <p>Acknowledge that babies are hard work. Care is easier if it is a shared journey</p>	 <p>Before you go to sleep, focus on what you've managed to do that day, rather than fret about things you haven't achieved</p>

The transition to parenthood is a time of great change and adjustment. It takes time to settle into your new role as parents. Sometimes it can feel very overwhelming and that is normal, but at other times those feelings can become more intense and unsettling. Other medical conditions can develop that need more specialised care and attention.

Perinatal Depression and Anxiety

Depression and anxiety during pregnancy and the first year of parenting (the perinatal period) affect around 20% of mothers and 10% of fathers; almost 100,000 parents in Australia each year. Previously known as Postnatal Depression, we now refer to it as Perinatal Depression and Anxiety (PNDA) as we know that symptoms of depression and anxiety often occur together and start during pregnancy, rather than just postnatally. Research also shows that if anxiety is treated during pregnancy, the risk of developing depression postnatally is lower.

PNDA, a diagnosable medical condition, is temporary, treatable and does not discriminate. It occurs when symptoms of depression and anxiety affect an expectant or new parent for two weeks or more and significantly affects daily functioning. It includes a wide array of symptoms and occurs when bad days seriously outnumber the good.

PNDA should not be confused with the 'baby blues' that occur three to five days after giving birth. These feelings of teariness and anxiety affect around 80% of new mothers, are transient, and will dissipate without needing to be treated. Often, just extra reassurance and support is all that is needed.

Postnatal Psychosis

Occurs in a very small percentage of women, approximately 1 to 2 in 1,000, but requires urgent professional support as the mother develops an altered sense of reality and thought distortions.

Adjustment Disorders

Parenthood is a time of great adjustment with nearly 50% of parents finding this transition challenging. Hence, this stress related condition may occur when roles are being redefined and parents learn to manage the emotional and physical stresses of being a new parent.

Postpartum Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

This may arise after a real or perceived traumatic birth experience. Symptoms for women and men include: flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance of reminders of the birth and anxiety or difficulty sleeping. It is temporary and treatable and may require professional help if it continues to impact daily functioning.



Perinatal Depression and Anxiety



1 in 5 mothers and 1 in 10 fathers
will experience perinatal depression and anxiety



50% of new parents
will experience
adjustment disorders



100,000 Australians
are affected by PNDA each year,
with maternal suicide being a
leading cause of death amongst
expectant and new mothers

Whatever the cause, depression and anxiety are treatable, so if you suspect you, or someone close to you, may be experiencing symptoms, it's important to seek help as soon as possible.

Contributing Factors

Risk factors for perinatal depression and anxiety may include:

- * Lack of emotional and/or practical support from family and friends
- * Lack of support or understanding from partner
- * Stress, such as related to finances, work or moving house
- * Certain personality types e.g. a perfectionist personality
- * Previous personal or family history of mental health issues
- * Trauma background
- * Recent bereavement
- * Age less than 18 years or over 35 years
- * Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture
- * Living in a rural or remote location
- * Culturally and linguistically diverse background

Feelings to be aware of:

- * Feeling like you can't cope
- * Feeling sadder than usual
- * Constant worrying
- * Feeling worthless
- * Finding it harder to do daily tasks
- * Withdrawing from family and/or friends
- * Lack of connection with your baby
- * Changes in appetite and/or sleep
- * Loss of concentration
- * Losing interest in sex or intimacy
- * Extended periods of irritability and anger
- * Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

Protective Factors

Everyone has certain characteristics which make them either vulnerable (risk factors) or resilient in the face of adversity. Below are some protective factors which lessens the likelihood of developing PNDA.

Protective factors include:

- * Strong support networks
- * Positive sense of who you are
- * Good coping and problem solving skills
- * Positive attitude towards life and seeking help
- * Having access to support
- * Seeking help early



Where can I find help?

Sometimes parents can find help in supportive friends or relatives. Professionals who can help include:

- * Child and Family Health Nurse
- * General Practitioner
- * Midwife
- * Obstetrician



These health professionals are able to assess parents and can refer mothers and fathers to the following specialists if they require further support, such as counselling and perhaps medication.

- * Psychologist
- * Psychiatrist
- * Social worker
- * Specialist support groups

What treatments are available?

Treatments are multi-dimensional and everyone's recovery is different with varying treatment times. Treatment may include:

- * Individual or group therapy from perinatal specialists using evidence-based therapies
- * Medication or evidence-based alternate therapies
- * Getting practical help
- * Listening to yourself and what you need, being able to prioritise your own wellbeing
- * Daily exercise
- * Inclusion of partners
- * If it's more serious, it may include hospitalisation and an assessment with a psychiatrist

How can Gidget Foundation Australia help me?

Gidget Foundation Australia is proud to offer FREE individual psychological counselling services for expectant and new parents nationwide.

Start Talking – Telehealth

The **Start Talking** program provides individual psychological counselling services for parents delivered via a video call service, similar to FaceTime, Zoom and Skype.

Gidget House – Face to Face

Gidget Houses are located in NSW, QLD and VIC, are easily accessible and offer a safe haven for parents to access individual psychological counselling services in person.

Gidget House and **Start Talking** provide compassionate holistic care for expectant and new parents and their families, in which mothers and fathers are respected, and the needs of each unique family are paramount. Services are available to any expectant and new parents who have a diagnosis of, or are at risk of developing, a perinatal mood or anxiety disorder and who have a baby up to 12 months old.

Partners are able to access our specialised services as well.

Our perinatal mental health specialists provide a minimum of 10 psychological counselling services free of charge within a calendar year.

Gidget Virtual Village – Online

Gidget Foundation Australia coordinates and moderates three private, Facebook peer support groups, connecting expectant and new parents with the Foundation and each other, in a safe, judgement free space.

The **Gidget Virtual Village** group supports new parents.

To join, please visit: www.facebook.com/groups/gidgetvirtualvillage

The **Gidget Virtual Village Dads** group supports expectant and new dads.

To join please visit: www.facebook.com/groups/gidgetvirtualvillagedads

The **Gidget Virtual Village for Expectant Mums** group supports expectant mums.

To join please visit: www.facebook.com/groups/gidgetvirtualvillageforexpectantmums

