

## **The Rise Of Postpartum Depression In Fathers**

Postpartum depression is an illness that a lot of people think only women can struggle with, but it's becoming more and more apparent that new fathers are also at risk of developing the baby blues. Worldwide, [10% of men showed signs of depression](#) from the first trimester of the mother's pregnancy up to six months after their child was born, according to a report from the Journal of the American Medical Association. Between the child being three to six months old, the chances of depression rose to 26%, which is more than double the usual rate of depression in men. The good news is that [PPD in men is becoming more recognized](#) and is treatable.

### **Sleep deprivation and hormonal changes could be the culprit**

One of the biggest known causes for PPD in mothers is hormonal changes that they go through during pregnancy, birth, and the following months. However, research has found that [fathers experience changes in their hormonal levels](#), too, such as testosterone levels dropping, while estrogen, prolactin, and cortisol go up. The reasons behind this are still unclear, but evolutionary biologists speculate that it could be a natural way of keeping fathers around to bond with their babies. Combine this [with neurochemical changes that occur](#) in the brain when new parents face sleep deprivation and this can explain why new dads get PPD. In particular, sleep deprivation is worse between 3-6 months, which explains the increased chance of PPD developing at this time.

### **Social and lifestyle causes of PPD in men**

A biological reason makes a lot of sense, however, there are also links to the chance of developing PPD to lifestyle factors. One of the biggest predictors is whether the child's mother also has PPD or depression. It's estimated that up to half of all men with depressed partners will develop PPD. With both parents struggling, this can have devastating consequences for the child, as well as their relationship as a couple, so it's important that both get help. Dads with a history of depression are also at an increased risk, along with an unstable relationship with the mother, financial problems, stress, and a sick or premature baby are other possible triggers. Men who have lost a loved one before becoming a parent also see a higher risk of depression, which is likely due to feeling like they're missing support and guidance, such as from a parent.

### **Risk factors for dads**

The cause and effect of PPD in fathers is unclear, may be different for each person, and can be a combination of things, but there are some risk factors that increase the chance of developing it, including:

- Becoming a dad when under the age of 25
- Having a history of depression and/or anxiety
- Financial pressures
- Not being in a relationship with the child's mother
- Being dependent on drugs or abusing them
- Having a baby who cries a lot or has sleep problems

### **What does PPD look like in dads?**

As with PPD in mothers, everyone can experience different symptoms and be affected in different ways. PPD can often appear to be the stress associated with becoming a new parent and looking after the baby, but these feelings of stress can be overwhelming for some people and they don't cope as well as others, leading to PPD. Some signs of PPD in fathers include fears, confusion, feeling helpless and uncertain about the future, withdrawing from family, work and/or social situations altogether, indecisiveness, frustration, anger, irritability, insomnia, [and negative parenting behaviors](#). Some people may turn to alcohol or drugs as a form of self-medicating, while others can find that problems arise in their relationship that can lead to violence towards their partner. Along with these psychological symptoms, physical symptoms can emerge too and include indigestion, appetite changes, weight changes, headaches, toothaches, and nausea.

## **Getting help**

Treatment for PPD in fathers is the same for mothers. Talking therapies have proven the most effective, sometimes in combination with medication. However, one of the biggest problems is that men don't often talk about their feelings due to how society may perceive them, but it's essential to get help so that the depression is treated. This can prevent a partnership with the mother breaking down and help to get the man to a point where they can effectively parent. Ideally, men should seek out a licensed mental health professional who specializes in working with men and have experience or training in PPD for men. This is because it's still a fairly taboo illness, so not all medical professionals will be aware of it or know how to treat it. Using online forums or finding support groups can also help men to know that they're not alone in how they're feeling and get some support.

PPD in fathers is something that has probably always existed, but it's not been very well understood or recognized. Now that it's being researched and spoken about, it's easier for men to be diagnosed with the condition and, importantly, treated for it. Treatment doesn't only improve the quality of life for the man, but also his partner, child, and everyone else around him.