

If 1 in 5 mothers experience depression or anxiety...

Then 1 in 5 fathers are in a difficult situation.

For new dads, this can mean supporting a distressed partner while navigating sleepless nights, newborn care, and the enormous adjustment to parenthood.

They want to help. But knowing what to say, what to look for, and when to seek support isn't always straightforward.

That's why SMS4dads partnered with PANDA to develop **4Dad4Mum** - a message set developed to give dads practical information and support when their partners are experiencing mental distress.

When this extra message set (4Dad4Mum) was originally released to dads enrolled in SMS4dads in 2023, the response was immediate.

To date, over ***4,300 fathers*** have asked to receive the 4Dad4Mum messages.

Here are 3 of the 32 messages sent over 15 weeks:

4Dad4Mum: *If mum gets very unwell you may need to do all care for your baby at short notice. If this happens, who could support you?*

4Dad4Mum: *Advice from mum who had depression "the best thing my husband did was hug me and repeatedly tell me I was a great Mum and he loved me"*

4Dad4Mum: *Getting to and coping with appointments can be hard. If you can't show your support by going with her try finding trusted friends/family who can.*

What dads think about 4Dad4Mum

We asked questions about these texts in an exit survey. Here is how 169 dads responded:

Did the messages...	Agree or strongly agree
Help you understand what was happening for your partner?	95%
Give you ideas on how to help your partner manage her feelings?	88%
Help you be confident in providing your partner with support?	85%
Assist in your relationship with your baby?	89%

Behind those statistics there are real fathers and families navigating difficult moments together. Here is what dads said about the messages:

Families and local services in rural communities play an important role in supporting parents through pregnancy and early parenthood.



"I got useful tips but mostly it helped me communicate with her about what she needs from me."

“My partner and I are quite lonely due to the distance between us and our families. This service has helped both of us to feel understood and comforted when we were unsure or panicky."

"It helped start a conversation which allowed us to explore issues together."

“Helped give some suggestions and ideas to help support my partner after a tough birth experience.”

Now, any dad in Australia can sign up to receive the 4Dad4Mum messages

If a father is concerned that his partner is distressed, he can sign up for this message set anytime. It is completely free, private, and he doesn't need to be

enrolled in SMS4dads.

Health professionals are encouraged to recommend the program to dads, and mums can share it with their partners if they feel they may need some extra support.

4Dad4Mum is already included in resources accompanying routine maternal screening in Queensland.

Help him help her.

Click here to see how you can direct dads to receive the 4Dad4Mum messages.

Why dads matter

Many women experiencing postnatal mental health challenges go undiagnosed and untreated, even when they are in regular contact with health services.

This means that partners, especially fathers, often become one of the most important sources of support during this time.

After a baby is born, a woman's world can shrink considerably. **Time away from work, reduced social contact, and the demands of caring for a newborn often make her closest relationship more important than ever.**

In this context, dads can play a vital role. **They help share the load of caring for the baby, support their partner's physical and emotional recovery, and often act as the first person to notice** when something is not right or when extra help may be needed.

Women who feel supported, understood, and emotionally connected to their partners tend to experience lower levels of stress and better adjustment to parenthood. On the other hand, relationship conflict, poor communication, or feeling unable to talk openly with a partner are linked

to a greater risk of postnatal depression and anxiety.

fathers are not just helpers. They are a key part of the support system that can influence how well mothers cope and recover during the transition to parenthood.

New resource to help dads help mums



We've developed a new double-sided flyer to make it easier for health professionals to introduce 4Dad4Mum to the families they support.

Designed with both **fathers and clinicians** in mind, the flyer explains what the program offers, how dads can benefit and how to get started.

Whether you're working in antenatal care, maternity services, child and family health, mental health or community services, it's a simple resource to have on hand when supporting families experiencing perinatal mental health challenges.

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