Young Parents



Image of a young parent is provided by the Brave Foundation

Introduction

Parenting has its ups and downs. Being a young parent can have its own specific challenges, including finishing your education and accessing help. Support and planning can assist in helping young parents to have a positive experience of parenting alongside supporting their children.

Being a new parent

Being a new parent can be an exciting time, with many new experiences and a lot of things to learn. You are not expected to do it completely on your own. There are a lot of services to help you as a young parent.

Here are a few things you can think about to help you be ready and supported for

your parenting journey:

- **Look at your Centrelink options:** Pregnancy Birth and Baby and Centrelink: Having a Baby have information about what Centrelink supports may be available for young parents both before and after the birth of the baby. Once your baby is born, you may be eligible for the Parenting Payment. You will need to contact Centrelink to tell them that you have had a change of circumstances, and you now have a dependent child. When you contact Centrelink, you will be able to find out if you are eligible for more support and apply. It's best to allow a couple of months for this process.
- **Find out where your local Child and Family Health service is:** Child and family health services are free for NSW parents and carers of children aged 0-5 years. They offer health and development checks for your baby, support and information on a range of parenting topics, and referrals to specialists for your baby. You can find out where your local Child and Family Health service is on the NSW Child and Family Health Services map.
- **Contact your local community centre for support groups:** Some support groups include young parents groups or services that help younger parents. You can chat to your doctor, child and family health service, a youth worker or contact your local council to find out about community supports in your area. You can use the NSW Child and Family Health Services map to find your nearest support service.
- SMS4Dads: A free text messaging service that supports men in their role as fathers by helping them to connect to the baby and their partner with wellbeing checks, professional support and information. Your partner/the baby's father can register from when the mum is 12 weeks pregnant.
- You may be able to access parenting classes through your NSW Health maternity services and Child and Family Health Services.
- Parent Line is a free telephone counselling and support service for parents and carers with children aged 0 to 18 who live in NSW. You can talk about almost anything related to parenting or raising a child. Parent Line can help with behaviour management, family relationships, children's development and much more. They can't give medical or legal advice, though their counsellors can assist you to access any services or

information that might be helpful. You can call Parent Line on 1300 1300 52 from 9am to 9pm weekdays and 4pm to 9pm on weekends.

- Relationships Australia have resources including online and face to face parenting workshops and courses across NSW.
- Raising Children Network – Raising children as a teenage parent has great information for teenage parents, including practical information about caring for a baby, how to take care of your own wellbeing, managing relationships and completing education.
- Family Planning Australia provides information about contraception options after having a baby. You can also contact your local women's health service or GP to discuss contraception options.
- Youth Health services are specialist services providing multidisciplinary, primary healthcare to young people

Friends, family, teachers, youth workers, Child and Family Health Services, Women's Health Services and healthcare providers can be good supports. Online support networks and information can help as well but it's important they are from trusted sources. When participating in social support groups, consider whether the shared information is helpful to your own experience.

> *Remember, you don't have to do this alone, so reach out to people you trust and make some new connections.*

Looking after yourself as a parent



When you become a parent for the first time, it can be exciting and exhausting all at once. While it's important to look after your child, it's also important to look after yourself as a new parent.

> ***Take time for yourself*** *– Even if it's only for a few minutes a day, do something nice for yourself. Rest when you can, eat nutritious food that will keep your energy levels up, and don't be afraid to ask for help.*

Support: Support for yourself and your baby is very important. You are not expected to learn how to be a parent on your own. Support could come from your partner, family, friends, from a health professional (such as your doctor (GP), midwife, child and family health nurse or clinician from the Aboriginal Medical Service), or from a service. There are support services such as The Brave Foundation that are specific for young parents.

If you are looking for support to eat well and be physically active, avoid alcohol, achieve a healthy weight and other healthy lifestyle changes you can contact the Get Healthy Service. The service offers free phone and online health coaching

support for people in NSW over 16 years of age. Register online or call 1300 806 258 Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, and Saturday 9am to 5pm.

Support can also look like talking to a friend after a long day, having a family member or friend cook food for you to freeze, or having a service come to you for medical appointments.

It's important to reach out for help when needed. If you think you need extra help speak to your doctor or child and family health practitioner.

Baby blues, depression and anxiety

It's common to go through a period of adjustment after having a baby. Your hormones are changing, and you may feel more emotional and anxious than normal.

This is known as the baby blues. Baby blues are very common. About 4 in every 5 people who give birth go through this, usually 3 to 5 days after the birth. You may feel teary, anxious and overwhelmed. For most people, this is temporary.

If the baby blues lasts longer than 2 weeks, it may be a sign of postnatal depression or anxiety. This can affect either parent.

In postnatal depression, you may have feelings of sadness, numbness and hopelessness. Postnatal anxiety is when your feel constantly worried which affects your day-to-day life. Some people experience postnatal anxiety and postnatal depression together. If you have symptoms of depression or anxiety, there's lots of support available to help you. Getting help early is important for you and your baby.

> *It's important you speak to your doctor, midwife or child and family health nurse if you feel down, worried or distressed for more than two weeks. There is support available.*

You can also find out more information about depression during pregnancy and after birth at:

- ForWhen

- Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA)
- Beyond Blue
- Raising Children
- Centre of Perinatal Excellence (COPE)
- NSW Health: Mental health help for parents & babies
- Gidget Foundation Australia
- SMS4dads

For more resources about mental health in general, you can head to our Mental Health topic.

Being the partner



All new parents need to look after their wellbeing; this includes the partners of the person who carried the baby. Becoming a parent can be a big change and non-birthing partners may need support to adjust to their new role too.

For more information for partners visit Beyond Blue, or A guide for dads: Caring for

everyone during perinatal mental illness. SMS4dads is a service where you can receive free text messages, support, info & tips, especially for dads & dads-to-be.

You can also visit the mental health topic for more resources.

Keeping your baby safe and well

If you are finding it hard to take care of your baby, or have concerns about your baby's safety or wellbeing, it's very important for you to seek support.

There are a number of services available that can provide support and assistance:

- Parent Line NSW 1300 1300 52
- Tresillian 1300 272 736
- Karitane Careline 1300 227 464
- PANDA National Helpline 1300 726 306
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
- Lifeline Australia 13 11 14

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Women and girls are at greater risk of experiencing domestic violence from their partner when they have a new baby. You may experience this abuse for the first time, or it may get worse when you have a baby.

Domestic and family violence includes any behaviour in an intimate, family or domestic relationship that is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, or causes fear for your safety or wellbeing.

If you are experiencing domestic violence, you are not alone, and it is not your fault. Domestic and family violence is never okay, and the person being violent is the only one responsible for the violence.

You have a right to be safe and supported, and there is help available. You can speak with your healthcare worker privately and talk about ways to protect your safety.

You can also seek free and confidential support 24/7 from:

- NSW Domestic Violence Line 1800 65 64 63
- 1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

Resources for young parents

- Raising Children Network have videos about pregnancy and parenting
- Youth Links have resources and community links for young parents
- Brave Foundation are a support service for young parents
- Pregnancy Birth and Baby have information on all stages of parenting
- Young Pregnant and Parenting Network have a list of services including rural and regional services
- Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA) are a support organisation for parents experiencing perinatal anxiety and depression (Mon to Fri, 9am – 7.30pm AEST/AEDT) Call 1300 726 306.
- Pregnancy, birth and the first 5 years information about pregnancy and the first 5 years of your child's life, plus the NSW Health services that can help you along the way.
- Baby Map – Early Childhood Educational Videos | STARTTS this animated video series has been developed for parents and caregivers from refugee communities and features 6 short, animated videos exploring the importance of play, joy and attachment for healthy development of 0-3 year olds. It is available in 13 community languages.
- Healthy Living NSW for free information and resources to discover simple ways to eat well, get active and find support to help you and your family feel better, stronger and healthier.