

fact sheet

SELF-CARE FOR EXPECTANT AND NEW DADS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK



SELF-CARE TIP CV-19 New Dads_8.4.2020

We are collectively experiencing unsettling and unprecedented global times.

If you and your partner are currently expecting a baby, or in isolation with a newborn, we understand that the COVID-19 outbreak may be causing additional stress and worry.

Along with the common worries that new parents can experience, the added uncertainty at this time may be overwhelming some days. Please know that you are not alone, many other expectant and new parents are experiencing the same feelings. Your role as partner and father is one of the biggest life transitions, and to be adjusting to these changes during such extraordinary times is understandably challenging.

Providing support to your partner at this time also has added concerns, as they may be experiencing heightened levels of anxiety. Remember that we are all in this together, and that there is support available for you both. There are also evidence based ways that you can take care of yourself, so that you can take care of your family as best you can.

CONNECT WITH OTHER DADS AND FRIENDS ONLINE

Becoming a dad can be a time of mixed emotions and you may have a lot of questions. It is common to feel overwhelmed, worried, exhausted and concerned about how you are coping with it all, especially if you are isolated at home. Having a phone or video chat with another dad can help lighten your mental load, and it can help to remind you that you're not alone. If you can arrange to chat with a trusted friend, or even send a text message to connect, this can help with those overwhelming feelings. Remember too that many other dads are most likely feeling the same way as you!

START TALKING

Beyond those important conversations with other dads and trusted friends is the need to know when

you might need a little more support. Opening up the conversation and sharing your feelings as an expectant or new parent is the most important first step in reaching out. It can also be the most difficult.

If you are experiencing any emotional distress, and just not feeling yourself for 2 weeks or more please reach out to someone who can help you. It could be your partner, GP, boss, or a Psychologist. Relationships can be strained during this isolation period, and talking about how you are going and getting some strategies can make a big difference. Talking can also reduce your isolation – you are not alone in this and just because you are a guy you don't have to 'tough it out!'.

You can find out more about **accessing support** here: <https://gidgetfoundation.org.au/get-support/covid-19-support/>



LIMIT NEWS CONSUMPTION TO RELIABLE SOURCES


It is best to limit your consumption of news to reputable sources only, and in limited doses at this time, as there is a lot of unreliable information available. It can help to feel informed, however it can also add to the sense of overwhelm and worry. Social media is an important source of connection for new parents, please be mindful of how much time you are spending mindlessly scrolling though, as this can really impact on your energy. Turn off at least 30 minutes before bed and if you do enjoy social media platforms then find those that boost your mood or make you laugh as opposed to those that bring you down.

EXERCISE

It's amazing how a dose of fresh air and sunshine or even a short lunchtime walk or work out at home can impact your emotional wellbeing! A small amount of safe sun exposure, a walk or a run can give you some more energy that might help you →



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Gidget Foundation Australia exists to support the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents to ensure they receive timely, appropriate and specialist care.

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feel better about life right now! During those long, intense days and months as a new parent isolated at home, some regular exercise has proven to boost endorphins and mood, help with sleep and increase energy. Parents now are often sharing the load and taking turns looking after older children as you juggle work and family life, so maybe take your older children with you for a morning activity – this enables exercise and time connecting with your children as well as giving your partner a break.

TAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF

It can be hard to give yourself a break at times, there is a lot of pressure on dads to be the 'rock' for their families and the one that is holding it all together. Remember that you are not alone, and that those high expectations placed on you by others and even yourself can be tough and you need to be kind to yourself. Remind yourself that you are doing the best you can, this is a big life adjustment, everyone is adapting to the new normal as best as they can, and it can take time to feel at ease in the role of new parent. Keep life as simple as possible amongst all the uncertainty and be realistic about what you expect of yourself and others.

GRATITUDE

The practice of gratitude can help to switch your focus. Isolation is tough, it is also a chance to spend quality time with your partner and newborn, time that you may not have normally had. Many parents express that life is busy and fast paced, and that their newborns grow up so fast! In the middle of all the anxiety, perhaps this is a small silver lining, life has slowed down. Enjoy it now before it no doubt ramps up again!



TIME TO YOURSELF



It may feel really hard to find some time to spend on your own at the moment, can you grab some headphones and listen to some of your favourite music or a podcast for 30 minutes? Speak to your partner about setting aside some alone time for each of you to tune out and chill out as often as you can.

DAILY SELF CARE

This may not come naturally but now more than ever self care is so important. This may just mean doing one thing a day at a time that suits the family, something that you enjoy. It could also include making sure your sleep routine is good or considering if it needs a shift, eating as well as you can and drinking plenty of water. If you practice daily self care you will lessen anxiety, manage worries better and be more effective overall. It will help you become more resilient and you may even have more energy to manage life's demands and the extra ones we are all feeling right now. 🌸



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