

Perinatal and early parenting adjustment: GP information sheet

Pregnancy and the early months of parenting can bring joy, change and many new demands. Mothers, fathers, partners and parents of any gender may all find this time brings big feelings. Adjusting takes time, and support is available.

About this sheet. We have written this sheet as psychologists, in the hope that GPs may find some of it useful. It offers general information only and is not a clinical tool.

How it may show up in everyday life

Some parents, partners or the people close to them may notice things like these. They can look quite different from one family to the next.

During pregnancy

- Worry about the months ahead might grow
- Feelings could shift from day to day
- Plans may feel uncertain

After the birth

- Tiredness might build quickly
- Emotions could feel close to the surface
- Days may blur together

Feelings about parenting

- Parents might doubt themselves
- Expectations may feel hard to meet
- Some could feel a sense of loss for their old life

Partners

- Partners might feel unsure of their role
- Some may keep their own feelings quiet
- Work and home could feel hard to balance

Everyday life

- Sleep may be broken
- Time for themselves could feel scarce
- Getting out might feel like a big effort

In relationships

- The couple relationship may change
- Friendships could shift
- Family support might feel close or far away

What the person might be bringing

Parents and partners may feel they ought to be coping, and might find it hard to say that things feel difficult. Some may first mention tiredness, the baby's sleep or feeding rather than their own feelings.

A warm, curious conversation may help it feel easier to talk. Feeling heard without judgement can be a meaningful first step.

What GPs **already do well**

Opening gently

GPs often see parents many times during pregnancy and the early months. A calm, gentle opening can help parents and partners share how they are going.

Listening to the story

GPs often know the person, and sometimes the whole family, over many years. That wider view of family life can be very valuable.

A steady point of contact

GPs can offer a calm, familiar presence as people explore their options, working alongside other professionals.

Seeing the whole person

GPs often hold the bigger picture of someone's health and wellbeing, which can be very reassuring.

What psychology **may offer**

Understanding

- Time to make sense of a big life change
- Making room for mixed feelings
- Recognising strengths as well as challenges
- A safe space to talk

Practical and family support

- Gentle ways to ease worry and stress
- Support for partners and the couple relationship
- Ideas for adjusting expectations
- Working alongside the GP, midwives and child health nurses

Everyday things **some people find helpful**

These are simply possibilities. What helps one person may not suit another.

- Rest whenever it is possible
- Accepting offers of help
- Connecting with other parents
- Small moments of time for themselves
- Sharing feelings with someone trusted
- Being patient with themselves

Trusted **Australian resources**

PANDA panda.org.au | National Helpline 1300 726 306

Gidget Foundation Australia gidgetfoundation.org.au

COPE cope.org.au

Referring to **Strategic Psychology**

Our psychologists work with children, adolescents and adults. If a client would like to see one of our team, they can call us on 02 6262 6157 or visit strategicpsychology.com.au. Medicare rebates may be available with a GP referral.

This sheet offers general information for GPs to consider. It does not replace clinical judgement.