

The perfect text for a new dad this Father's Day

Becoming a father for the first time is an exciting but challenging experience for many men. Engaging with this group has historically been challenging but researchers from the University of Newcastle have developed a way to deliver information and support to men as they become fathers.

Chief investigator Dr Richard Fletcher says that the answer is through their phones.

"SMS4dads uses text messages linked to the baby's development to keep him informed and know how to support his partner during and after the pregnancy. The messages come through during the day when dads are at work. By the time they get home they have an idea of what is happening with their baby, and they have tips to help bonding and their partner" said Dr Fletcher.

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) believes this initiative will encourage new dads to provide physical and emotional support to mums and babies to help relieve burdens associated before, during and after pregnancy.

"Dads these days don't want to be just cheering from the grandstand, they want to be part of the action. This new initiative is a fast and easy way to communicate with fathers on ways they can help new mothers and babies," said PHAA Senior Policy Officer Alexandra Culloden.

"Lots of changes are taking place when a baby is born. Not only are dads experiencing the emotional shift but other changes including financial and social changes will impact new fathers. These tips will help fathers manage these changes so they can support their family emotionally and physically," continued Ms Culloden.

The project is available to dads across Australia with a pilot study carried out at the University of Newcastle showing that dads respond to the texts which provide them with practical hints and tips. Some of the messages are from the baby. That is to build the connection with dad. For example:

- Baby-proofing your home now will make things less stressful when I come along. You might be too busy looking after me then dad.
- Do you and your partner agree on what is important and what is not at this time? Keep talking to her about this because things are changing.
- Hey dad. I am going to triple my weight in the first year of life. Don't let this happen to you too.
- Just because I am sucking my hands doesn't always mean I am hungry. It might be my way of chilling out.

Dads also get regular check in messages asking how he is going since evidence shows that dads can experience depression and anxiety just like mums, [approximately 10 percent of new dads](#).

"This project is a win-win for dads and their families. We have had more than 500 dads try out the texts and they have given it the thumbs up. We know it is working because dads can opt out at any time but they don't. The dads receive messages every week until their baby is six months old," says Dr Fletcher.

If you know someone who is headed for fatherhood, or who has just had a baby, send him the link to www.sms4dads.com for Father's Day. You might get a thank you from his baby one day.

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