



3 Evidence-based Reasons to Engage with Dad During Prenatal Education

1) Most dad's are part of the baby's life from the beginning

- At the time of their birth, 85% of babies live with both their parents,
- Two thirds of the rest have parents who consider themselves a couple, or say they are 'good friends'.
- Only 1 baby in 20 is born to parents who describe themselves as 'not in a relationship' (Kiernan & Smith, 2003.)
- Fathers in two-parent families carry out an average of 25% of the family's childcare related activities during the week, and one-third at weekends, (EOC, 2003)

2) New dads want to be involved but often feel ill-informed and unsupported by healthcare professionals

- The *becoming a father* study involving 800 participants found that one third of the study participants felt inadequately informed on vital issues, notably about mood swings in pregnancy, what to expect in labor, post-natal depression, coping with the baby's crying, bathing the baby, the impact on the couple's relationship, breast-feeding and bottle-feeding. (**Becoming A Father by Debbie Singh and Mary Newburn, NCT Maternity Sales Ltd, 239 Shawbridge St, Glasgow G43 1QN, £11 inc p&p., 2005**)

3) Father's behavior impacts the health of mom & baby

- **Smoking**
 - In the US, 24% of white men and 26% of black men smoke cigarettes (National Center for Health Statistics, 2008). And, according to a new study by the UW school of social work, men continue their daily smoking routine or substance use before, after and even during their partner's pregnancy period (Univ of Washington, 2008). Healthcare providers/educators often neglect to address dad's behavior during the prenatal period. A British study verifies that most of the fathers were not

asked about their smoking habits either during the pregnancy or after the birth, let alone given even the most basic information to encourage them to quit (Blackburn et al, 2005b)

- A study in Northern California found that exposure to paternal preconception smoking alone (as well as in combination with postnatal passive smoking) is highly likely to be important in the risk of childhood leukemia (Chang et al, 2006).
- Paternal smoking is directly linked with SIDS - and also indirectly, via low birth-weight (Health Education Authority, 1999).
- **Alcohol:**
 - Alcohol dependent fathers sire girls with a strong tendency to ADHD (Knopik et al, 2005).
 - Heavy paternal alcohol use doubles the risk of insecure attachments between mother and infant (Eiden & Leonard, 1996).
 - Fathers' alcoholism is associated with increased feelings of irritation and aggression toward baby and mom (Leonard et al, 2002; Eiden & Leonard, 2000).
 - Paternal alcohol and illicit drug use are strongly correlated with domestic violence (Tuten et al, 2004; Eiden & Leonard, 2000; Leonard et al, 2002).
- **Breastfeeding:**
 - Dad's support and knowledge of breastfeeding advantages has a strong influence on the initiation and duration of breastfeeding (Swanson & Power, 2005; Arora et al, 2000; Bromberg & Darby, 1997).
 - Dad's smoking is a risk factor for breastfeeding cessation at 4 months postpartum (McLeod et al, 2002).
 - Low-income women in particular suggest that male support is crucial in their decision to breastfeed (Schmidt & Sigman-Grant, 2000).
- **Mom's coping and parenting success:**
 - Fathers are their main source of emotional support for mom; their ability to support mom is directly related to their coping ability (Fathers Direct, 2000).
- The quality of mothering is linked to support from dad and the quality of the relationship between the two (Guterman & Lee, 2005).

This information is largely based on the report, Maternal and Infant Health in the Perinatal Period, by Adrienne Burgess of the Fatherhood Institute