

fact sheet

PARENTING IN A RURAL OR REMOTE LOCATION DURING COVID-19



SELF-CARE TIP Parenting Rural_15.7.20

Expectant and new parents in rural and remote areas of Australia have faced one of the toughest and most challenging years in their lives thus far. 1 in 5 new mums and 1 in 10 new dads will experience some form of perinatal depression and anxiety and with COVID-19 we anticipate this will increase. Hence, it is more important than ever to spread awareness of what Gidget Foundation Australia can do to support expectant and new parents. We are here to help!

Starting the parenthood journey at any time can be a daunting task. Add in the extra stresses of COVID related issues, and it can be even tougher. Often those more rural communities do not have enough perinatal specialists, treatment can be delayed due to wait times or be cost prohibitive.

Experiencing PNDA can be a difficult topic to talk about due to the stigma associated with the condition, but those in rural areas might also have increased pressure to 'tough things out' and hide their vulnerabilities. They could also be concerned about lack of confidentiality or finding culturally sensitive care options. Self-care opportunities could also be limited.

Changes to hospital visits and birth plans as well as access to support during pregnancy has also been a cause for concern. There are also greater geographic distances between family and friends, so the village concept can be lost, especially with physical distancing rules.

Therefore, those living in these areas need to understand of these issues and our perinatal specialists understand and are here provide support.

TIPS FOR MUMS AND DADS LIVING IN RURAL OR REMOTE LOCATIONS

If you are not feeling yourself or you are concerned about someone close to you, it's important to seek help as soon as possible.

Below are some practical strategies but if you do not feel better within a few weeks after trying some of these strategies then it's a good idea to reach out and get some professional support.

- Talk with trusted people
- Educate yourself via reputable sources

- Be kind to yourself as you face this and patient as you recover
- Develop a routine to your day with some flexibility and add in at least one thing you enjoy
- Limit your time on social media – it's not always accurate or helpful
- Learn some ways to lessen anxiety and lift mood e.g. eat well, try to get more rest, exercise daily, take time out, do a regular video call to a friend, join safe online parent groups (such as the Gidget Virtual Village <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gidgetvirtualvillage>), sing out loud, listen to your favourite music, focus on what you can do and maybe even practice some gratitude, exercise daily
- Develop a plan to help you when you are having a bad day e.g. who can you call? what makes you feel better, what can you focus on? Understand that all new parents have bad days and know that it will pass
- Connect to culture and country as a source of strength or your spiritual side
- Recognise when things are getting too much e.g. being a good monitor of yourself, take note of mood changes, behaviours that are out of character or thoughts that worry you
- Talk to your GP or midwife/child family health nurse
- You could organise your own group or community activity 🌸

If you have thoughts about suicide or harming yourself, call **Lifeline** immediately on **13 11 14**.

Other helpful resources:

PANDA 1300 726 306 www.panda.org.au

Beyond Blue www.beyondblue.org.au

Gidget Foundation Australia

www.gidgetfoundation.org.au

Rural Minds (developed by Rural Remote Mental Health LTD) to address the psychological wellbeing of those living in rural and remote communities www.rrmh.com.au



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 Gidget Foundation Australia

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Gidget Foundation Australia exists to promote the importance of emotional wellbeing among expectant and new parents, their healthcare providers and the wider community to ensure that those in need receive timely, appropriate and supportive care.