

Resources to help when talking to teens

Education

There are a number of Teen Parent Units (TPU) which allow pregnant and parenting teenage girls to continue their education. They have on-site childcare centres and other community supports available. teenparentschools.org.nz

Thrive Teen Parent Support Trust

Lots of great resources including booklets for young parents and their support people. They offer support services to parents in Auckland. www.thrive.org.nz

Youth One Stop Shops (YOSS)

YOSS offer free health care and social support nationally, many offer parent groups and antenatal classes for parents under 25. www.health.govt.nz

Mental Health

Under 25y olds are entitled to free counselling which can be accessed via their GP. Text or free call 1737 any time for support from a counsellor

Youthline – 0800 376 633, free text 234 or email talk@youthline.co.nz or online chat thelowdown.co.nz – or email team@thelowdown.co.nz or free text 5626

Breastfeeding

For specific questions about alcohol and breastfeeding

www.healthnavigator.org.nz

Australian video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Fbcl_H4q2w

For general advice about breastfeeding lalecheleague.org.nz

Fathers

greatfathers.org.nz/greatfathers

www.kidzneeddadz.org.nz



Support is crucial, especially from people who are able to sit, listen, and make no judgments.

Be non-judgmental, supportive and respectful.

Be clear about confidentiality when seeing young people.

Young parents make great parents!

Contact Us

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Talking to teens

Perinatal anxiety and depression

New Zealand has a higher rate of teen pregnancy compared to other OECD countries, however the teen birth rate has dropped each year since 2008. Figures from 2018 (15 births per 1000 women age 15-19) show half the number of teen births compared with 2008 (33 per 1000). Rangatahi Maori (teens) have a higher birth rate than the national rate, but this is also declining. This reduction in teen birth rate aligns with global trends.

Young parents are at higher risk of perinatal mental health problems, with research showing that twice as many teen parents are at risk of developing postnatal depression compared with older mothers. This is particularly the case if there is a past history of mental illness, or there are financial worries or a lack of support systems.

In addition to this, one study suggests that teenagers with pre-existing major mental illness are nearly three times as likely to get pregnant than their peers without a mental illness.

Different challenges

Young parents face some different challenges from older parents. Some will enter parenthood with pre-existing vulnerabilities and poor mental health. Other challenges can include poverty, relationship breakdowns and perhaps no experience of positive parenting themselves. These can cause difficulties for young parents and their children, however this can also be a time of opportunity and many young parents and their children are thriving.

I don't know how to adult ...

"Older people expect you to suddenly be an adult, just because you have had a kid. It is really stressful, and I really don't know how to adult."

Florence, 17



PADA

Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Aotearoa is the national organisation committed to eliminating the stigma around perinatal mental health in New Zealand.

We do this by championing awareness and facilitating best practice in perinatal mental health and wellbeing to ensure all families/whanau have access to appropriate information and support.

This resource is freely available to assist in raising awareness of anxiety and depression in new parents.

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Facing constant shame and stigma

A common theme that arises when talking to young parents is their experience of stigma and judgement from others around them. This negative stereotyping often comes from members of the public but sadly many also experience this from health professionals. It is so important not to make judgments and assumptions when working with any parents, but especially with young parents.

Pregnant and parenting teens describe facing constant shaming and stigma. Not treating young parents with dignity and respect is harmful and acts as a barrier to them getting help and support.

Young parents also talk about feeling “caught between two worlds”. Navigating parenting and meeting their baby’s needs, while also going through the transition of adolescence to adulthood are a unique challenge in this group. There may be a feeling of loss for what life was like before. It becomes harder to go out with friends and do the same things others their age are doing. This can lead to a loss of friendships. Many young parents describe feelings of loneliness and isolation and may feel abandoned by their peer group.

A lot of antenatal groups and parent groups are full of older parents, and it can be easy to feel uncomfortable or judged. This is why it is so important for young parents to be able to access age specific parenting education and support groups where they can connect with other parents their age. It is worth bearing in mind that not all young parents will want youth specific resources and can find this demeaning, preferring to be treated the same as any other parent.

A common source of stress for young parents is the relationship with their partner/father of the baby. They may feel that their partner isn’t doing what they want them to do and aren’t helping enough. Or if the relationship has broken up it can be very difficult to navigate co-parenting.

Whanau support is crucial at this time and studies show that a supportive relationship between mum and her mother and the baby’s father is a protective factor for teen parents and their children. Services for pregnant women and parents must provide a youth friendly environment as well as an environment which is welcoming to fathers and the wider family.



Breastfeeding

Young parents can be less likely to breastfeed due in part to a lack of confidence or embarrassment. It may not be the social norm in their community, and may not have been something they have seen happening around them. Many young people are influenced by their peers, mothers and partners and rely on them for information and support, so try to include them in your discussions about breastfeeding.

Peer support from other breastfeeding parents the same age can be valuable. It might help to focus on more immediate benefits of breastfeeding such as saving money, saving time, not needing anything extra when leaving the house, environmentally friendly and less illness for baby.

Sometimes hearing about benefits which come further away in the future are less motivating in this group. Young parents are keen for good information about breastfeeding and it can be helpful for any parent to know that breastfeeding can be hard at first but that it gets easier and that there is free support available in the community. Many young parents find breastfeeding a very rewarding experience.

Things to remember

- Not all teen pregnancies are unplanned.
- Not all teen parents are solo parents.
- Young parents can feel they have to do even better at parenting than older parents as they can feel the need to prove that they are good parents. This adds extra unnecessary stress.
- Young parents are usually very motivated to give their child a good life and often want to finish their education so they can get a good job and provide for their child. Their child can be a huge motivating factor. They are committed to their children, their education and their future. See this as a time of opportunity to support parents to access support they need.
- Cost and transport may be a barrier to accessing support.
- Be clear about confidentiality when seeing young people.
- Don’t forget to discuss contraception at post-natal appointments.
- Encourage them to bring their partner and whanau to appointments and include them in the care of the mother and baby.
- Many young parents want to give their child a different childhood to the one they had. They may need support in their attachment and relationship with their baby in order to achieve this. Programs such as circle of security can help.
- Young parents often feel judged by society, health professionals, and members of the public. This makes everyday things more challenging and stressful than they need to be.
- Support both parents in their relationship if they are still together. Becoming a parent puts a lot of strain on relationships and sometimes these are relatively new partnerships. Support the couple in the early months, especially involving the dad.

Dads are important too



Involve the baby’s father wherever possible. He is an important part of this child’s life and he also needs support in his new role. Many teenage fathers are keen to be involved with their children, but there are often many obstacles to overcome in order to do this. It is easy for young fathers to feel left out and unsure of what their role is.



THE NUMBER OF BIRTHS IN NEW ZEALAND IN 2018:

58,020

THE NUMBER OF BIRTHS IN NEW ZEALAND TO MUMS UNDER 19 IN 2018:

2,076

THE PERCENTAGE OF PREGNANT WOMEN WHO SUFFER FROM DEPRESSION DURING OR AFTER PREGNANCY:

25%

THE PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO DEVELOP DEPRESSION AFTER THEIR CHILD IS BORN:

10%