

GUIDE FOR

DADS

ON

PATERNITY

LEAVE



MEN'S HEALTH FORUM

far
FOR LIVET

GUIDE TO PATERNITY LEAVE

Men's Health Forum

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GUIDE FOR DADS ON PATERNITY LEAVE



Welcome to the guide for dads on paternity leave or considering going on paternity leave. Here you can find advice and information about paternity leave, such as:

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There are also lots of comments from dads we have interviewed about taking paternity leave. We hope the guide will be useful, and that your paternity leave is happy and fulfilling.

WHY GO ON PATERNITY LEAVE?

Both you and your baby will benefit if you take paternity leave, because:

It gives the baby a secure base

When both parents take leave, the baby's secure base is doubled. It lays the foundations for the child to have two special people to trust and turn to. The baby will also learn that both men and women can provide care, and you may find that the child comes more often to you for comfort or a hug.

Paternity leave gives you some very special time to spend with your baby. If you have never been on paternity leave before, it may be hard to imagine what it is like. Be prepared for a completely new experience in your life as you dedicate yourself completely to being a twosome: just you with a little baby. It will probably be a challenge, but wonderful too.



The first two weeks were tough, the next eight were fantastic. Really, really great to be there and just cosy up and tickle and play and laugh... He has thoroughly enjoyed it too, and we have had lots of fun.

Dad on paternity leave



Three
quick
points

WHY TAKE PATERNITY LEAVE?

- Lots of things to do with your child
- It strengthens your relationship
- Good for your partnership and family life

You form a special relationship with your child

Many fathers who have taken paternity leave describe how it has led to a very special relationship between them and the baby. It may not have been there previously, or an existing relationship may be strengthened during paternity leave. Many dads also find that during that period the child goes to them instead of mum, for example to be comforted or at bedtime. It's a surprise and an upheaval, but a real pleasure for most dads.



Research suggests that children with close relationships with their fathers are less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol, reach higher levels of education, are less likely to commit crime, and show positive characteristics such as independence, robustness and social skills.

You give your child the best chances in life

Taking paternity leave often strengthens feelings for the child. Paternity leave is something positive to enjoy for its own sake, but apart from that, the relationship is very important for your child's well-being and development. Research shows that children with strong ties to both parents do better in several aspects of life, and generally thrive better.

You strengthen relations with your partner and family life

Some fathers find that their relations with their partner and family life are better after paternity leave. They say they understand better what it is like to stay at home with a small child. Those who take paternity leave are more likely to take an active part in caring for the child, for example staying home on the child's first sick day. When you take part in caring for your child, you strengthen the relationship between you.

There appear to be fewer break-ups and divorces among families who share parental leave and responsibility for the children.



HOW MUCH LEAVE CAN YOU TAKE?

Under the current rules for parental leave, you can apply for 24 weeks of leave after the birth, if you live with the child's other parent at the time of the birth. If you are in employment, 11 weeks are yours alone – so there are several things to consider:

- How much of the time do you and the baby's mother want to spend on leave together?
- How many of your 24 weeks do you want to use?
- When in the period of parental leave will you take your weeks individually and together?
- Are you going to take the 11 weeks reserved for you?



Parental leave after the birth

The first two weeks of parental leave reserved for you are intended as a time for both parents to be together with the new baby. This gives a great feeling of security and a fantastic feeling of togetherness around it. However, many parents feel it is too early to go back to work after two weeks. So it might be a good idea to plan some of your holiday immediately after the two weeks of parental



I think she's really pleased that I want to – I know she is. She knows it has meant shorter maternity leave for her than she would have had if I had not taken these weeks. And I think she had to weigh it up with herself, but then I insisted, and she accepted it. And she was pleased. In short, she supported me in taking leave.

Dad on paternity leave

leave, if you don't want to use any more of your leave at the beginning.

How will you divide your parental leave?

Next, you have to decide how to share out the weeks that are not reserved. It is a very good idea to talk this over as early as possible in the pregnancy, so that you have more or less finished discussing it before the birth.

It can be difficult to talk about, because there are so many things to consider about dividing your leave: traditions, breast feeding, what you want, the family



Yes, well, in principle she was mostly positive about it, but then she... well, when her own maternity leave was over, then she wished it could have lasted a bit longer, didn't she?

Dad on paternity leave



*I would happily
take a year more.*

Dad on paternity leave

economy, what it means for your work, what is normal among friends and the family, and what is normal at your workplace.

It is important that you think first about what is best for the baby and your relationship with him or her. At the same time, it is best to admit to each other that it is difficult to give up weeks of parental leave, because you both want to be with your baby as much as possible. It can be especially difficult once you have started on your parental leave.

Most parents, both fathers and mothers, want more time with the child when they have taken parental leave.

When should you take paternity leave?

If you only want to take the weeks that are reserved for you in addition to the first two weeks immediately after the birth, then several things suggest that you should take the last nine weeks of parental leave – especially out of consideration for breast feeding, if your baby is still being fully breast fed at ten months old, although very few are.

Then you will probably be the parent responsible for introducing the child to the nursery or day care, or wherever your child will be looked after. This is an important and enjoyable task; you will also

get to know the place where your child will spend a lot of time in the next years, and the people who will be looking after the child.

Do you want to take your reserved weeks?

Some fathers simply do not want to take the nine weeks of parental leave reserved for them. If you are in doubt, there are several things you can consider. First and foremost, *why?*

You can listen to the experiences of others who have taken paternity leave, and men who did not take paternity leave, and weigh your reasons against theirs. You can perhaps get some good advice from someone like the health visitor.

If you are not certain about taking all nine weeks, consider taking some of the weeks instead. You might feel you would prefer to take the weeks of leave, or some of them, at the same time as your partner, so you are together with the baby. If you do not take the weeks that are reserved for you, they will be lost, as they cannot be transferred to the child's other parent.



I just think it was so important for me to take a lot of leave if I could, because I just know, like, what sort of relationship can build up.

Dad on paternity leave



WHAT DO OTHER FATHERS THINK OF PATERNITY LEAVE?

Here you can read about what others have felt about a longer paternity leave.

Most were very satisfied with their paternity leave

In general, most dads say they were very satisfied with their time on paternity leave. They emphasise especially things like being alone with the baby and building up a better relationship.

In questionnaire surveys there are very few fathers who say they would have taken shorter paternity leave if they could choose again. On the contrary, the great majority say that they would have liked to take an even longer period of paternity leave.

”

I would say it is... or was, I mean... the best time of my life in fact. I mean it was just fantastic to have so much time alone with her and spend so much time with her.

Dad on paternity leave

What is everyday life like on paternity leave?

Many describe how everyday life on leave surprised them a little. On the one hand there is a lot of time to fill, but on the other hand it may be difficult to get very much done. Getting out of the house may require planning. At the same time, planned and unplanned midday naps or sudden nappy changes can disrupt even the best plans. All the same, many find it good to have some variety during the week, where they can go to activities with the baby or meet other dads or parents.



It was cool. And it was tough. I had thought about lots of things to do and have fun with the baby and that sort of thing. So I started on the first day and made a list of all the things I wanted to do. But I never managed to do more than make that list.

Dad on paternity leave

For some, going at a really gentle pace and doing nothing is a relief when life is generally hectic. Others feel there is too little happening, and time crawls by. In that case it can be a great help to talk to others in the same situation, or to plan things you and the baby can do together.

What you can do on paternity leave

You can keep a good book or film series handy, that you can turn to. You can also listen to the radio or podcasts while you go for a walk with the pram. Or you can spend time calling old friends and family members whom you don't usually get round to talking to.

“If we had not planned anything for a whole week, and we were just at home, while the friends and family were at work and did not have time to come and say ‘Hi!’, things could get a bit monotonous, and heavy going. Not as if looking after the baby was hard, but well, yes, the monotony. Things just went round in circles, and that could actually be tough.

Dad on paternity leave

TIPS

Three good books for dads, that you can read or listen to during your leave:

- “Father for life – a book for a man as a father” by Tobias Prentow and Svend Aage Madsen
- “Fathers – Tales of coming alive as a father” by Aydin Soei
- “What every father should know” by Thomas Skov.

TIPS

Podcasts for all those walks when the baby is asleep:

- The DAD Side
- Being dads
- Dad, there is something we should talk about
- Bloody Daddy
- I’m a dad

Paternity leave can be tough

Some fathers find it is definitely tough going. They have been surprised how much energy was actually needed to take care of the baby while they were on paternity leave. This is often because you can be short of sleep, and for some it is demanding to be available for the baby all day.

” *It's hard as well, and... Well, there was that time when he cried for two hours in the middle of the night, and then it's hard to get up and feel like the world's best dad the next day.*

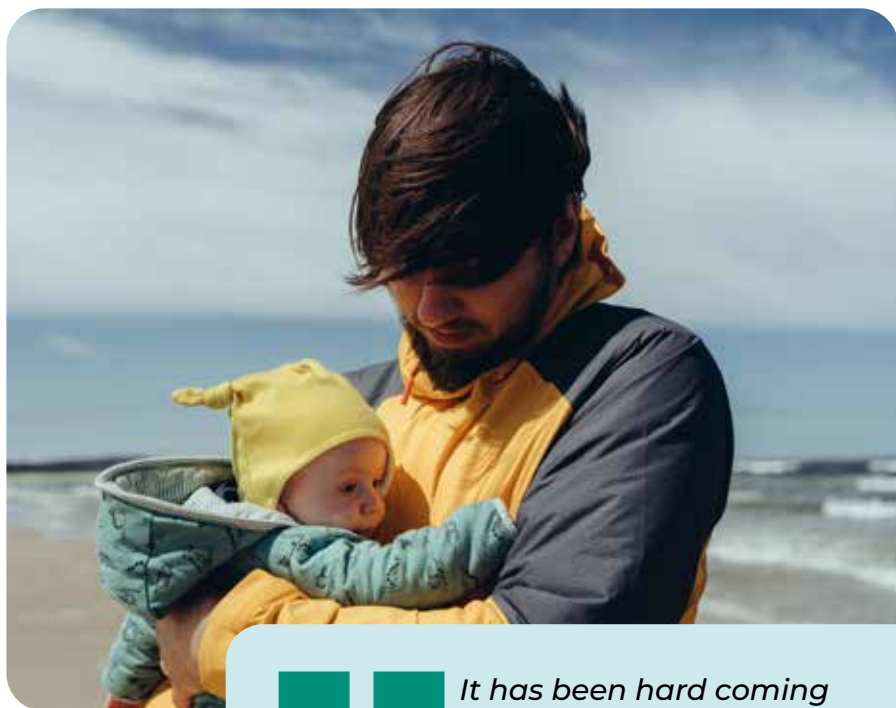
Dad on paternity leave

Even though some find it hard, the same fathers still say it was well worth it all the same, and they would do it again. Many also mention all the positive things that paternity leave has meant, even after it is over. There is especially the relationship with the child, but also the understanding of what the mother has been through during her maternity leave.

How does paternity leave fit in with work?

Some find that becoming a father and taking paternity leave gives rise to considerations about their working life. Some feel that taking a long period of paternity leave can get in the way of their careers. Others find it a challenge to be the first or the only man at their workplace who chooses to take paternity leave.

Some say that becoming a father has given them new priorities in connection with work and family life. Suddenly, family life takes a bigger place in their lives. That is often reinforced by taking a long period of paternity leave. Consequently, many fathers also find it hard to go back to work after paternity leave. They miss their child, and they miss the closeness and time together with the child. Some consider finding another job, perhaps something closer to home, so they can spend more time with the child in their daily life.



” *It has been hard coming back. All that about suddenly having to go back to the treadmill... and now, suddenly, you simply have higher priorities than your job.*

Dad on paternity leave

THINGS YOU CAN DO ON PATERNITY LEAVE

On paternity leave there is lots of time for closeness and being together with your baby – but there is also time for lots of activities! Some find there is enough to do with nappy changing, regular naps and mealtimes, but others feel a need to do something more active with the baby, and/or to talk to other adults.

Here are some suggestions for activities that you can use as inspiration.

Dads' Playgroup

You can go along to the Dads' Playgroup with your child and play in the company of other fathers. The playgroup is open to all fathers with children aged 0-5 years. You can come whenever it suits you in opening hours. If your child is asleep, you can have a coffee with the other dads – there is always room for the pram. You will normally be met by a coordinator, who will welcome all dads and make sure there is enough coffee and something for everyone to play with. At some playgroups the health visitor looks in, too. You are welcome to ask questions, if you have any. There are playgroups in many different towns across the country. Opening hours vary from town to town. Find the nearest Dads' Playgroup at www.farforlivet.dk.

“

I went along to form a network and get to know people in the same situation as myself. Not many of my immediate friends have children, so I joined to be able to talk to others about baby matters and to find people to mirror myself. I did not find it was all fun and games being a parent: sometimes it was difficult, too, and it was good to be able to talk to others about that.

Dad, member of a Dads' Playgroup



Dads' groups

More and more municipalities are now starting Dads' groups through the health-visitor service. You may already have been invited to join a group, but otherwise you can ask your health visitor whether it is possible to join a group. There are also other groups for fathers on the social media, which you can search for. A third possibility is to start your own group, for example through local Facebook groups or posting notices where people meet in your municipality.

” *It was really cool, and you really get something out of it when you have a social group together. And you have someone who is in the same boat, or in the same situation in life as yourself. So you can air lots of different ideas, because you can't always air all of them with your partner. You can perhaps say that people often see parenting in two different ways, can't you?*





It varies a great deal what people want to do in a dads' group. Some want to chat over coffee, while others prefer to do something active, such as going for walks, getting some exercise, or meeting in the countryside. For some, it is enough just to meet digitally.

But however the dads' group works, the dads who take part are usually very satisfied. It gives them something to do during their paternity leave, and there are other adults to share large or small problems, or just to talk about something other than children. Many find talking to other dads is very positive.

Go for a walk in the countryside

You can have lots of happy times going out in the countryside with your child, playing and getting some exercise in the fresh air. For a small child it can be an adventure just to see, smell and touch things outdoors. If you want to do more than that, you can find out whether there are nature guides who arrange outings in your area. Perhaps there are walks where you can pick berries, gather fungi, or look at birds, trees and flowers.

TIPS

THINGS TO REMEMBER ON A WALK IN THE COUNTRY

You will both enjoy it best if you are warm, dry, and not hungry. What to take with you:

- shoes or boots that are good for walking in
- several layers of clothes, so you can adjust if you get hot or cold
- sun cream in the spring and summer
- small snacks for breaks along the way, e.g. fruit, buns, crispbread and water bottles
- wet wipes, nappies and paper tissues
- a terrain buggy, a baby wrap or carrying sling.



You can also find lots of nature activities at www.farforlivet.dk, where you will also find a list of different nature apps and the most beautiful and interesting places in the countryside.



Find inspiration for activities

At www.farforlivet.dk you can search for the area where you live, and find specific activities for you and your child nearby. However, there may also be lots of other interesting activities close to you. Try checking out libraries, museums, culture houses or sports clubs, and see whether they have activities for dads on paternity leave.

Other things you can do, wherever you live:

- Train motor skills with physical games and exercises at home. Your child can join in the simplest exercises – but otherwise it is quite entertaining just to watch dad bending and stretching!
- Go to a playground. Most municipalities have excellent playgrounds for children of all ages, but you may have to search for them. Try Googling or searching for playgrounds on your municipal website.
- Go swimming. Many swimming baths have warm-water pools, children's areas, or specific times reserved for families with small children. Remember swim nappies and a swim suit or swimming pants.
- Go out in the garden or the park. Equipped with a bucket, spade and sensible outdoor clothes, you can spend lots of time happily in any weather.
- Make a den indoors, put up a little tent, or make an obstacle course with things you have in the house. Small, cosy spaces are fun, and can be places for closeness with your child.

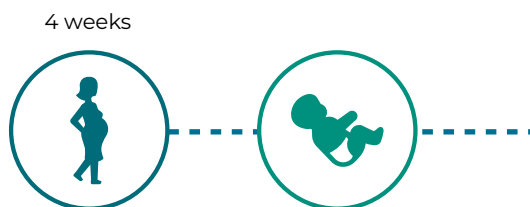
WHAT ARE THE RULES ABOUT PARENTAL LEAVE?

You can read here about the rules for parental leave, and where you can find more information about your specific situation.

These are the rules for parental leave

Between them, parents are entitled to 48 weeks of leave with maternity/paternity benefit after the birth of the baby, provided the parents meet the conditions for benefit. The 48 weeks are divided equally between the parents, so that as a point of departure, each has 24 weeks leave with benefit after the birth. Out of these 24 weeks, two weeks are reserved for each of you to take together immediately after the baby is born.

For those in employment, 9 more weeks out of the 24 are reserved for each of you. That means that a total of 11 weeks with maternity/paternity benefit are reserved for each of you, and they cannot be transferred to the other parent.



Either parent may transfer the remaining 13 weeks with maternity/paternity benefit to the other parent, if he/she does not wish to take them personally. This applies to both the father and the mother.

Additionally, mothers are entitled to four weeks' leave before the birth, with maternity benefit.



Earmarked

May be transferred

Earmarked

2 weeks

13 weeks

9 weeks



2 weeks

13 weeks

9 weeks

Note: The 9 earmarked weeks apply only to those in employment.

“

It's a bit complicated, arranging your parental leave... I can't even remember now, how many weeks there are. There are some weeks you are entitled to, and then there are some weeks they have negotiated about, and it depends whether you work in the public or private sector and ... which collective agreement.

Dad on paternity leave



Can you be paid wages during parental leave?

The model above shows how many paid holidays and what benefits you are entitled to during parental leave. However, whether you can be paid wages during parental leave depends on your employer.

If you are a **wage earner** covered by a collective agreement, then in many cases you will be paid wages during part of your parental leave. You will have to ask your employer or trade union about what applies to you.

If you are not covered by a collective agreement, in some cases you may be entitled to wages during parental leave, and in other cases you will not. Again, you have to ask your employer or trade union about the terms and conditions at your workplace.

If you are **self employed**, you may also be entitled to compensation for earnings during parental leave. In this case it depends on your annual income. Read more about terms and conditions and your options at www.barsel.dk.

If you are a **student, unemployed, on sick leave** or receiving **welfare payments**, then in most cases you will be entitled to maternity/paternity benefit. You can find lots more information on the rules for parental leave, and find your own situation at www.borger.dk/barsel.

It can be a jungle

Many fathers say it was difficult for them to work out what the terms and conditions were, and how much paternity leave they were entitled to. This was partly because many authorities lacked experience in advising fathers about their entitlement to paternity leave. It is hoped that with reserved paternity leave, this will change for the better.

Further
infor-
mation

STILL CONFUSED?

Depending on your situation, there are various places where you can find out more, such as:

- Your employer
- Your trade union
- Your unemployment fund (A-kasse)
- www.barsel.dk
- www.borger.dk/barsel
- Udbetaling Danmark
- The Ministry of Employment

”

And that was where we ran into problems trying to work out – well – who should pay what, and who did not have to pay. We spoke to Udbetaling Danmark several times, and they said one thing, but when we talked to our workplaces, they told us something different.

Dad on paternity leave

FORUM FOR
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SUNDHED**



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Vi støtter gode liv