

# Associations Between Postpartum Depression and Couples' Sexual Function and Sexual Distress Trajectories Across the Transition to Parenthood

Dawson et al. (2021)

How do new parents' depressive symptoms relate to their own and their partners sexual function and sexual distress in pregnancy after their baby is born?

## Methods

203 first-time parent couples from North America completed online surveys at 20- and 32- weeks pregnant, and 2- weeks, and 3-, 6-, 9-, and 12- months postpartum assessing sexual function (e.g., issues with sexual arousal or desire) and distress (e.g., about one's sex life), and postpartum depressive symptoms.



## Results showed that...

...both mothers and fathers had poorer sexual function right after their baby was born, which improved over the postpartum period. Only mothers who gave birth—but not partners—experienced clinically significant problems with sexual function in pregnancy that extended until a year after their baby was born.

Three months after their baby was born, the more depressed mothers felt, the lower their own and their partners' sexual function.



## In short

Couples who are first-time parents may experience a sensitive period in their sexual lives during the transition into parenthood, as it is shown to be linked to drops in sexual function and distress, therefore putting them at risk for greater depressive symptoms.

Dawson, S., Leonhardt, N., Impett, E. A., & Rosen, N. (2021). Associations between postpartum depression and couples' sexual function and sexual distress trajectories across the transition to parenthood. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 55, 354-477.