



SCHOLARS
STRATEGY NETWORK

To Improve Maternal and Child Health, Include Fathers

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Every year in June, attention briefly turns to fathers. It's great that we have a day dedicated to celebrating fathers. But we must urgently recognize fathers year-round as core family members who help to shape the health of their family.

It's a mission that goes beyond a new "World's Greatest Dad" mug and a single day of observance.

As a social worker and a pediatrician working every day with families, we see the impact fathers have on maternal and child health. When fathers are involved and supportive during pregnancy, it helps to reduce stress for mothers and lower stress leads to better birth outcomes.

After birth, fathers influence how children eat, sleep, play and form relationships through caregiving and by modeling healthy (or unhealthy) behaviors.