

LATE FATHERHOOD

**What kind of dads do new, midlife fathers make?
By all accounts, very good ones.**

Thinking of starting a new family in your 40s? How about in your 50s or 60s? For many men, the idea is appealing. A 2003 National Vital Statistics report shows that birthrates for men between 46 and 49 were up 21 percent between 1980 and 2002 and up 9 percent for men age 50 to 54.



The reasons for later fatherhood are many. Members of both sexes are marrying later and delaying parenthood. Men marry young wives who want children. Men who marry a second time want to start a family and feel they have the time to spend more time with their children—something they weren't able to do with their first family and kids because of work commitments. Others realize that a child represents their legacy and it's finally time to create the next generation.

Conceiving may take longer (older men often have lower sperm counts), but most babies, when born, will be normal.

What kind of dads do new, midlife fathers make? By all accounts, very good ones.

"I'm more conscious of what it means to raise a child," says one professional who had his first of three

children at age 41. "It's a different level of maturity."


Midlife fathers are more inclined to spend more times with their kids, participate in school activities, attend youth sporting events, help with homework and take a more active role in raising their kids.

Older fathers are not as obsessed with climbing the corporate ladder as younger fathers—many times, because they have already reached the top or near the top in their careers.

"I'm at a point in my career when I'm not a fast tracker—by choice," says another father, whose last child, now age eight, was born when the father was 45. "Family comes first. I'm a different person than when I was at 30 or 40 and totally into my career. I have a different set of priorities now. When I'm with my boys, I'm 100 percent focused on them."

BY DIANE RUMBAUGH

Kids are also good for the mind and body.

Says the professional with three kids, "They may wear you out, but they also have a way of invigorating your life." 

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