Including expectant fathers in antenatal education programmes in Istanbul, Turkey.

In this article we present the results of three studies investigating methods for including men in antenatal education in Istanbul, Turkey. Participants were first-time expectant parents living in low and middle-income areas. After a formative study on the roles of various family members in health during the period surrounding a first birth, an antenatal-clinic-based education programme for women and for couples was carried out as a randomised, controlled study. Based on the results, separate community-based antenatal education programmes for expectant mothers and expectant fathers were tested. There was demand among many pregnant women and some of their husbands for including expectant fathers in antenatal education. In the short term, these programmes seemed to have positive effects on women and men's reproductive health knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. In the clinic-based programme the positive effects of including men were mainly in the area of post-partum family planning, while in the community-based programme positive effects among men were also seen in the areas of infant health, infant feeding and spousal communication and support. Free antenatal education should be made available to all expectant mothers and when possible, men should be included, either together with their wives or in a culture such as that of Turkey, in separate groups.