

Being prepared: help and support

Finding support can be tricky, especially if you are on your own. Starting to look at local activities and groups during your pregnancy can be a good way to meet new friends and mums in your area. Look in the local children's centre and on the Netmums website for antenatal classes, baby massage, antenatal and postnatal exercise groups, new mums groups and soon. *It is never too early to start meeting other pregnant women and new mums, or being active to support your mental health.*

The following groups/classes are local to me:

Empty box for listing local groups/classes.

Who could I ask if I need help with practicalities, such as shopping, tidying up and babysitting?

People I can call on are:

Empty box for listing people to ask for help.

Midwife:

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Health visitor:

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GP:

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Other:

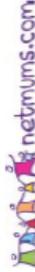
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For more info and a full list of support organisations, national and local, visit www.netmums.com/pnd or ring the Tommy's FREE Pregnancy Line on 0800 147800

Find more information at www.tommys.org/mentalhealth



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Send feedback to
mail@tommys.org



Endorsed by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP)
Find out more at <http://bit.ly/1BZpb0R>

Remember...

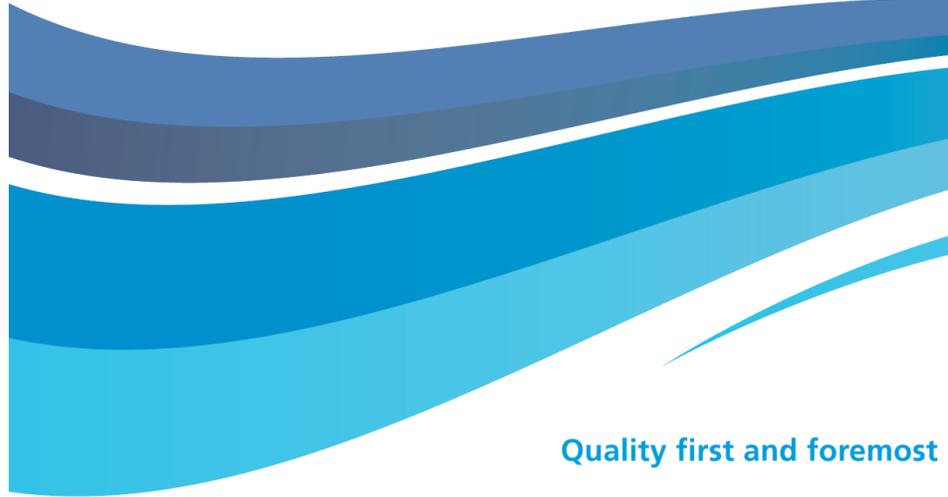
- Feeling emotionally unwell is common. It is nothing to be embarrassed about.
- Talking about it is the best first step in getting the right support.
- It can happen to anyone, whether you have a history of mental illness or not.
- If you have suffered before, it doesn't mean it will happen again.
- Being prepared can make a big difference, so you've taken the first step by using this plan

Record contact details here of a professional who should be able to help you or let you know of other support available if you are concerned about how you are feeling.

Ways to cope: what might appeal to me?

- Talking to someone I trust about how I feel, such as a parent, sibling, partner or trusted friend
- Talking to my midwife or health visitor about how I feel
- Keeping active
- Having a healthy diet
- Finding out about different ways to relax, such as yoga, meditation
- Asking for help with things at home, like chores and babysitting
- Asking for support if I am worried about my baby
- Finding out about how to change my thinking patterns
- Discussing the possibility of counselling or medication with my GP
- Keeping a journal of my feelings though pregnancy and beyond

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Quality first and foremost



Pregnancy & Postnatal Mental Wellbeing

Introduction

Pregnancy and the postnatal period are often considered one of the happiest times in a woman's life.

However, the physical and hormonal changes during your pregnancy and postnatal period (after birth and up to the first year) can make it an emotional time.

This is normal when you are going through a major life change such as becoming a parent.

Mental wellbeing is about being able to cope with problems, feeling good and functioning well, and is very important when you are expecting a baby and becoming a new parent.

During pregnancy your baby is exposed to everything you experience - the sounds in the environment, the air you breathe, the food you eat and the emotions you feel.

When a pregnant woman or a new mum feels happy and calm it allows the baby to develop in a happy, calm environment.

However, being depressed and/or anxious can increase certain hormones in the body which may affect the baby's developing body and brain.

My pregnancy & post-birth wellbeing plan

This plan is to help you prepare the support you might need to look after your mental health. While coping with the physical changes in pregnancy, birth and beyond, your emotional health is important too. Many women feel anxious, unhappy, mentally distressed, depressed or even more severely mentally unwell during this time, which can be unexpected.

This plan is to help you think about the support you might need to look after your mental health and wellbeing. It is your decision whether to share it with anyone else.

How am I feeling?

Take a moment to write about how you feel now, your thoughts about the birth and how you feel about your baby.



You may have mixed emotions about your pregnancy and your baby. This is completely normal. Here are some common signs that you should talk through with your midwife or health visitor:

- Tearfulness
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Being irritable/arguing more often
- Lack of concentration
- Change in appetite
- Problems sleeping or extreme energy
- Racing thoughts
- Feeling more anxious
- Lack of interest in usual things

Some women can also have:

- Intrusive thoughts
- Suicidal thoughts
- Strict rituals and obsessions
- Lack of feelings for their baby

Talking about how you are feeling helps you get through the exciting yet challenging time of becoming a parent. It doesn't matter who you talk to, but it is worth having someone in mind that you can trust and who can support you if needed. One of the first steps to getting better is knowing and accepting that you are unwell.



Boots
Family Trust

Often your friends and family will spot that things aren't quite right before you do.

I will ask
and talk to them about things troubling me.*

Also, ask yourself...

Am I the sort of person who
accepts that I'm unwell?



How might I start the conversation
if I feel embarrassed?

Who else can I turn to if I don't
feel listened to or supported?

*You may want to share this Wellbeing Plan with them

Further information

Local Community Pharmacy - Your local community pharmacies offer a wide range of services including information and general advice on symptom relief medicines as well as a prescription collection and delivery service.

For impartial and confidential advice or information on the services provided by Bridgewater or to receive this leaflet in an alternative format call our Patient Services team on 0800 587 0562.

What causes this depression and anxiety?

Popular images of motherhood suggest that mothers should be radiant and energetic, living in perfect homes with supportive partners. But life is not always like that!

The changes that being pregnant and having a baby can bring can increase everyday pressures in your life.

Financial worries, relationship difficulties, bereavement or lack of someone you feel you can talk to may add to the feelings of depression and/or anxiety.



Remember, you are not alone even though you may feel that you are the only person not coping.

Details of the many services available to support you are detailed on pages 12 and 13.

Visit our website at: www.bridgewater.nhs.uk

Baby Blues

The baby blues is a very common condition affecting about three out of four new mothers.

During the first week after your baby is born you may feel more emotionally sensitive and may have mood swings. One minute you can be laughing and the next crying. This is considered to be a normal reaction to the joys and responsibilities of new parenthood.

It may be associated with hormone changes, exhaustion and relief that the birth is over. With rest and support this condition will get better on its own.

Depression and Anxiety

Depression and anxiety are the most common health problems during pregnancy, with around 12% of women experiencing depression and 13% experiencing anxiety at some point; many women will experience both.

Depression and anxiety also affect 15-20% of women in the first year after childbirth.

You may experience one or more of the following:

- Crying spells or extreme sadness - not always for a reason
- Feelings of worthlessness, guilt or hopelessness
- Restlessness, lack of control or lack of energy
- Difficulty concentrating

Family Lives
Telephone: 0808 800 222

Children's Centres - see your local council website

Wigan Family Welfare
Telephone: 01942 876888

Halton Health Improvement Team - offers support around infant feeding, parenting skills and healthy lifestyles programmes.
Telephone: 0300 029 0029
www.haltonhealthimprovement.co.uk

Useful websites

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/relax

www.dadsmatteruk.org

www.netmums.com

www.mind.org.uk

www.live-lifewell.net

 [www.twitter.com/Bridgewater_NHS](https://twitter.com/Bridgewater_NHS)

 www.facebook.com/BridgewaterNHS

 www.facebook.com/bridgewaterhealthvisiting

Useful contacts

Your midwife, Health Visitor or GP.

Postnatal Depression Support Groups - contact your health visitor for your nearest group.

Samaritans

Telephone: 01942 492222 www.samaritans.org

The National Childbirth Trust (NCT)

Telephone: 0300 330 0700 www.nct.org.uk

CRY-SIS - a helpline for parents of babies who persistently cry

Telephone: 0845 122 8669 (helpline 9am to 10pm)

Mental Health Assessment Team:

Wigan 01942 482239

Warrington 01925 666647

Halton 0151 422 6804

Oldham 0161 716 2757

Primary Care Psychological Therapies IAPT Wigan

Telephone: 01942 772115

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) - Halton

Telephone: 0151 292 6954

Warrington Primary Care Psychological Service

Telephone: 01925 401720

Oldham Healthy Minds

Telephone: 0161 716277716

- Withdrawing from partner, family or friends
- Losing motivation and/or enjoyment of things
- Being anxious, irritable or worry excessively. This could include:
 - Irrational fears about your baby
 - Feeling you cannot cope with your baby
 - That only you can care for your baby.
- Changes in sleep or appetite e.g. sleeping or eating too little or too much.

If you experience any of these for longer than **two weeks** or if you feel overwhelmed by these or other worrying issues, regardless of the time frame, please visit your GP or contact your midwife or health visitor.

What is Puerperal Psychosis?

The term 'psychosis' refers to a state of mind in which the woman loses contact with reality.

It is a serious mental illness that affects 1-2 in 1000 new mothers. The condition is **very rare**.

It usually occurs within the first six weeks of giving birth, often within the first few days.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of puerperal psychosis may be restlessness, confusion and inability to sleep.

Some women suffer delusions which are false beliefs about their situation, for example, that someone is trying to harm them or their baby.

Some women also experience hallucinations, hearing or seeing things that others around them cannot.

Due to the seriousness of this illness these symptoms become quickly apparent and need early treatment from a health professional. The majority of women do recover.

Contact details for mental health professionals can be found on page 12 or you may wish to attend your nearest Accident and Emergency department.

If you think you are depressed

- Accept that you cannot carry on as normal.
- Talk to your family and friends; their support is very important.
- Seek professional help from your midwife, health visitor or GP. They will be able to give you information, advice and treatment.

Your midwife and health visitor offer screening for antenatal and postnatal anxiety and depression; this is carried out before and after your baby's birth.



The screening includes some simple questions which will help you to make sense of how you are feeling.

Your health visitor will support you in understanding your baby.

If you require further support your health visitor will offer this in the form of listening visits.

Your health visitor will discuss what services are available if you need more support.

Advice for family and friends

Pregnancy and the new baby's arrival may be a demanding time for all of the family, but particularly the mother.

If you think someone you care about could be depressed:

- Show them that you care by offering them love and support
- Listen to what they are saying and do not be dismissive
- Accept that they cannot carry on as before
- Do give time and try to be patient - it is your most precious gift
- Nurture their confidence - they may not believe in themselves right now
- Encourage them to take time out
- Offer help with practical child care arrangements
- Encourage them to seek and continue with professional support.

Supporting someone with depression can leave you exhausted too; make sure that you take care of yourself and share the load.

What about fathers?

Studies suggest that fathers can also experience depression after the birth of their child. It also suggests that between 5% and 10% of men experience depression during the first year after the birth of their child.

This can be due to:

- Increased responsibility
- The expense of having children and the change in lifestyle that it brings
- The altered relationship with your partner
- Lack of sleep and the increased workload at home.



If your partner is depressed this may make their role as a father more stressful, which in turn can add to the risk of you experiencing depression.

Tips

Tips to help you before and after the baby's birth, which may help to prevent anxiety and depression:

- Prepare not just for the birth but parenthood too by attending antenatal transition to parenthood classes
- Talk to your partner, family and friends, midwife or health visitor; no question is too small or too trivial
- Accept that your needs are important and give yourself 'time out' each day - a soak in the bath or a walk in the park
- Eat properly - small amounts that need little or no cooking; do not try to crash diet
- Avoid alcohol: remember, alcohol is a depressant and is dangerous to the developing baby
- Get regular exercise; this produces endorphins (mood enhancers) that help combat pain, tiredness, and sleep disturbances
- Rest when possible - learn to 'cat nap'. If you cannot sleep, do not worry rest instead
- Try to minimise your stress levels. Avoid major changes in your life such as moving house unless absolutely necessary
- Try not to be 'super mum'. If help is offered, accept it and never be embarrassed to ask for help

- Do not worry if you do not feel like having sex. Talk to your partner - a kiss and a cuddle can help maintain your relationship
- Remember - the world is still out there. Access your local support and activity groups.

Postnatal depression is worse at different times of the day for different people.

- Plan to do any necessary jobs at the time of the day you feel at your best.
- Take one day at a time and set yourself small achievable goals.
- Keep a feelings diary. Gradually there will be more good days than bad.
- Accept that there will still be bad days even when you are on the road to recovery. The bad days become bad hours, then bad moments; the rest of the day is still there to enjoy.

