

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH

for partners, family members and carers

Aims of factsheet

- To explain perinatal mental health problems
- To list some signs to look out for
- To give some helpful advice and support

Is someone close to you expecting or recently had a baby?

Are you concerned that they have low mood and are not coping well?

You may be in the best position to help. Research suggests social support to be effective in overcoming emotional difficulties during this time.



What do 'Perinatal' mental health problems mean?

'Perinatal' means the time of pregnancy and the first year of the baby's life. Perinatal mental health problems are quite common with up to 4 in 10 Mums and Dads reporting significant stress, anxiety and depression during and after pregnancy.

It is also common for women to experience the 'baby blues' which can occur during the first week after childbirth. It is probably due to the sudden hormonal and chemical changes that take place in your body after childbirth. Symptoms can include; feeling emotional and irrational, bursting into tears for no apparent reason, feeling irritable or touchy, feeling depressed or anxious. All these symptoms are normal and usually only last for a few days.

However, sometimes this low mood can persist and can also be in pregnancy too. This is when you need to seek some help from your GP, midwife or health visitor.

What is the cause?

There are no known causes for perinatal mental health problems, however research suggests there is more risk if there has been a traumatic birth, a lack of support, relationship difficulties, financial concerns, stressful life events or maybe none of the above! Remember mental health problems can happen to anyone and your loved one can recover!

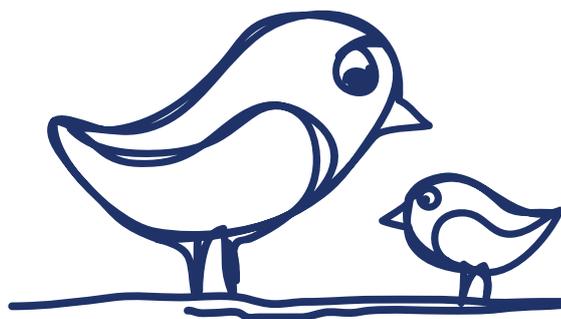


Types of Perinatal Mental Health Problems

- Antenatal Anxiety (including OCD)
- Antenatal Depression
- Post Natal Anxiety and/or Depression
- Puerperal Psychosis
- Eating Disorders
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Mother-infant relationship issues

Some of the signs to look out for...

- Displaying poor concentration or disinterest
- Quite often tearful
- Appear to have lots of anxious or nervous energy
- They may voice that they are having sleep difficulties
- They don't appear to be bonding with the baby
- Expressing irritability or anger
- Social withdrawal
- Expressing or displaying obsessive thoughts or behaviour
- Voicing suicidal thoughts



Get in Touch: info@twainmind.org

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What can you do to help?

- Talk to the mum or dad about how they are feeling encouraging them to open up. Reassure and acknowledge their feelings without judging them or brushing them aside. Be empathetic and provide comfort and support. Resist the temptation to try to 'fix' everything!
- If they have a diagnosis, realise that they need support from their GP, health visitor or midwife and remind them that they will recover.
- Offer practical help and support around the home, for example; preparing meals, cleaning, shopping etc.
- Offer to look after their baby for a few hours so mum and dad can get some rest or they can have some 'me' time. You might encourage them to read a book or go for a walk or have a sleep.
- Encourage them to join a parent and baby group so that they can interact with other new parents who may be experiencing similar symptoms. Peer support can be invaluable.
- Encourage them to complete an 'Enjoy Your Baby' online cognitive behavioural therapy course at www.twainmind.org or attend a post natal depression group in their area.
- Signpost to organisations that can offer help and support;



- > Netmums.org provides an community plus will show what support is available locally
- > For fathers having a difficult time during this period, take a look [HERE](#) for more support.
- > Online leaflets and factsheets can be found at www.mind.org.uk and www.rcpsych.ac.uk. There are more links below.

Some tips for looking after YOU

- Try to think of it as a 'stressful life event' that has happened and there is a period of adjustment
- Don't be afraid to seek help yourself as it can be emotionally draining providing so much support
- Look after yourself by making sure you CONNECT everyday with some else, try to be ACTIVE everyday even if it is a walk in the park, try to LEARN something new everyday, remember to GIVE every day to someone and finally to TAKE NOTICE of all that is around you and reflect. A '5 Ways to Wellbeing' plan can be found [HERE](#).



Statistics

- 4/10 of women with perinatal mental health problems have suffered a traumatic birth
- Around half of women think the main cause of their feelings is isolation
- 2/10 of women report feeling pressure to do things 'right' whilst another 2/10 of women report a lack of support
- 4/10 of women are too embarrassed to say anything
- 3/10 of women never tell a health professional how they are feeling
- 7/10 women said their relationship with their partner has been affected by their mental health problem
- More than a quarter report trouble bonding with their baby
- More than one in five report suicidal thoughts
- 4/10 of women report 'time' as being most helpful for recovery with another 3/10 saying that recognising their illness is key

Help and Resources:

www.twainmind.org
www.netmums.com
www.fathersreachingout.com
www.app-network.org
www.apni.org
www.bestbeginnings.org.uk
www.breakthesilence-pni.org
www.solihullapproachparenting.com
www.maternalocd.org
www.nct.org.uk
www.pandasfoundation.org.uk
www.marcesociety.com
www.tommys.org

www.foundationyears.org.uk
www.nspcc.org.uk
www.your-baby.org.uk
www.beginbeforebirth.org
www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNNsN9lJkws

Factsheets, leaflets and guidance:

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/postnatal-depression/#.U3ycVCgq8TI
www.tommys.org/file/Wellbeingplan.pdf
www.solihullapproachparenting.com/information-for-parents
www.rcm.org.uk/college/your-career/information-services/resources/

www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/11004/30433/30433.pdf
<http://maternalmentalhealthalliance.org.uk/>

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