

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH

for new and expecting parents

Aims of factsheet

- To help you know more about perinatal mental health problems like post natal depression
- To help you help yourself or help your partner
- To find out what support there is for you



It is common to feel somewhat 'on edge' during this perinatal time especially if this is your first baby and it is common to experience the 'baby blues' for 3-5 days after giving birth. However if during pregnancy you are feeling very low or anxious or after the birth your low and anxious feelings persist, please read on and seek help from your GP, midwife or health visitor.

What is a 'perinatal' mental health problem

'Perinatal' is the period of time around your pregnancy and into the first year of the baby's life. The most common mental illness is post natal depression, but there are others including anxiety. See the box to the right for different types of mental health problems during this time.

Why do I feel this way?

There are no known causes for perinatal mental illness, however research suggests you may be more at risk if you have had a traumatic birth, have a lack of support, are experiencing relationship difficulties, have financial concerns, you may be experiencing stressful life events or maybe none of the above! Remember mental health problems can happen to anyone and you can recover!



You are not alone!

Perinatal mental health problems are relatively common with up to 4 in 10 new mums and dads reporting significant stress, anxiety and depression during and after pregnancy.

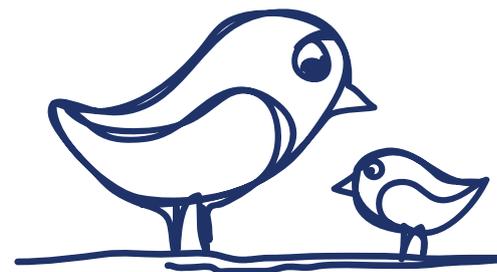
Don't suffer in silence! It is important that you recognise these feelings so that you can get the right help and support for the wellbeing of yourself and your baby.

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

You may be feeling and experiencing some or all of the following....

- Low mood / feeling bleak or unhappiness
- Poor concentration or lack of interest
- Feeling worthless / disengaged
- Tearfulness
- Anxious / nervous energy
- Changes in appetite
- Low sex drive
- Sleep difficulties
- Difficulty bonding with your baby
- Irritability / anger
- Social withdrawal
- Obsessive thoughts / behaviour
- Suicidal thoughts



What can you do to help yourself?

- Talk to your partner, family or friends about how you are feeling.
- Keep your expectations low and accept help and support with household tasks and chores.
- Ask your midwife/health visitor or a family member to help you complete a pregnancy and post birth wellbeing plan online www.tommys.org/file/Wellbeingplan.pdf
- Keep a diary of how you are feeling.
- Join a local group or discover a new activity with other expectant or new mums.
- Eat regularly and have a healthy well balanced diet (try not to judge your body shape too harshly!).
- Keep active and get out of the house but make sure you also get plenty of rest.
- Practise relaxation techniques such as yoga, pilates or mindfulness (free online course at bemindful.co.uk).
- Spend time interacting with your baby, laughing, playing, talking, singing. Their brain is developing every time you interact, even just smiling at your baby grows their brain!
- Join a baby massage class.
- Complete an 'Enjoy your Baby' cognitive behavioural therapy online course at www.twainmind.org
- Remind yourself that these feelings won't last forever!



There is support out there...

- Be honest and talk to your midwife or health visitor about how you are feeling. Don't be ashamed or afraid, they are there to help.
- Online support through the netmums.com community. This allows you to connect with other new or expectant parents who may be experiencing similar feelings. You can also discover what support there is locally too.
- 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.



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 problem 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/#.U3ycVCgq8Tl
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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