

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH

for primary care professionals

Aims of factsheet

- To help you have a better understanding of the different types of perinatal mental health issues
- To offer practitioners tips on assessment and intervention
- To Increase awareness of managing maternal mental illness during pregnancy to maximize infant development
- To be aware of cultural health beliefs and preferences.

What does 'Perinatal' mean?

'Perinatal' includes the time around pregnancy and the first year of the infant's life. A time that can significantly impact mother, infant and family.

Vulnerable women include those who:

- Have previous history of mental health issues
- Have difficulties coping with stress
- Have a relationship conflict
- Have a lack of support
- Have had a traumatic birth experience
- Are reluctant to discuss feelings
- Are under pressure to 'do things right'
- Have had a difficult upbringing with poor role models
- Have 'perfectionist/idealist' type personalities
- Have financial worries

The mother/infant relationship:

Maternal mental health can have a direct impact on babies before and after birth.

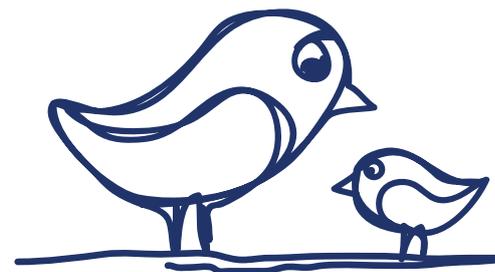
The neurological connections made during this critical time, lay the foundation that may help a child to manage their emotional and social environment for the rest of their lives.

Types of Perinatal Mental Health Issues

- 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.

Symptoms of Maternal Mental Health Issues

- Low mood
- Tearful
- Not able to feel happy
- Sleep difficulties
- Low sex drive
- Feeling worthless
- Poor concentration
- Anger
- High levels of anxious energy
- Not going out
- Feeling jittery
- Changes in appetite
- Panic attacks
- Confusion
- Suicidal thoughts
- Difficulties bonding with baby
- Obsessive thoughts and imagery regarding the baby's welfare.



Maternal Mental Health

Assessment: For Maternal Mental Health consider a psychosocial assessment like the [Edinburgh Post Natal Depression Scale](#) or [PHQ9](#) or [GAD7](#) or [HADS](#). These help assess more serious risks including puerperal psychosis, suicidal ideation and risk of serious self harm. [Nice guidelines](#) offer further information. New guidelines will be available December 2014.

Interventions: Consider the [five ways to wellbeing](#) as a short intervention...

- **CONNECT:** Social interaction
- **BE ACTIVE:** Exercise
- **TAKE NOTICE:** Be reflective
- **KEEP LEARNING:** Learn something new everyday
- **GIVE:** Give to someone/something

[A wellbeing plan](#) can help women prepare for the support they might need to look after their mental health.

Mother and infant relationship

Assessment: Consider an observation of the mother and infant's interactions for positive signs of bonding and growing attachment.

Interventions: Provide psychosocial education about the infant's need for cognitive and emotional development gained through closeness, such as cuddling, and interaction as well as the mother's appropriate response for example providing comfort when the child is crying.

Consider options for increased social support; family, friends, local groups, faith communities and online groups. Some [useful guidance](#) and [parent factsheets](#) are available.

Cultural Awareness

- Consider shame and stigma of mental illness in different cultures
- Consider different responses and understandings of mental illness
- Consider preferences of traditional and western medicines
- Consider different post-natal traditions e.g. extended 'bed rest' for the mother
- Consider different preferences of holding an infant
- Consider different views of pregnancy ie showing 'bump' in public, father's views on attending groups, or mother's avoidance of attending.

Sources:

Department of Health 'Parents Views on the Maternity Journey and Early Parenthood'.



Help and Resources:

www.twoinmind.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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