

How are you... really?

Pregnancy and childbirth can be a wonderful experience, but it also brings many changes and challenges. If you feel scared or overwhelmed it is important to know that help is available - many mums and dads-to-be experience anxiety during this time. There is no need to suffer alone, so talk to your midwife, doctor or other health carer. You might be suffering from antenatal or postnatal anxiety or depression if you can tick any of the boxes below. Do any of these things affect you?

- Panic attacks
- Persistent worry, often focused on fears for your health
- Developing obsessive or compulsive behaviours
- Experiencing abrupt mood swings
- Feeling constantly sad, low, or crying for no obvious reason
- Being nervous, 'on edge', or panicky
- Feeling constantly tired and lacking energy
- Having little or no interest in all the normal things that bring joy
- Sleeping too much or not sleeping very well
- Losing interest in sex and intimacy
- Withdrawing from your partner, friends and family/whanau
- Being easily annoyed or irritated
- Finding it difficult to focus, concentrate or remember
- Engaging in more risk taking behaviour like using alcohol or drugs
- Having thoughts of death or suicide

25%

of women suffer from depression during or after pregnancy

10%

of men develop depression after childbirth



Talk about it. It is important to seek support and treatment for how you have been feeling as soon as possible. Talk with someone you trust to be supportive.

Take it easy. Taking care of yourself is an essential part of taking care of your baby.

Consider therapy or counselling. If nothing seems to work, seeing a therapist or a counsellor may help. You may need antidepressants - there are safe options for pregnant women.

Seek help immediately if you are suicidal. If you are feeling disoriented and unable to handle daily life, contact your midwife, doctor or person you trust immediately. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but a sign that you are taking important steps to keep yourself and your baby safe and healthy.

Caring for someone with perinatal anxiety or depression

Caring for someone struggling with perinatal anxiety or depression can be really hard. You might feel:

- **Confused or uncertain:** “Is this becoming a real problem?”
- **Useless:** “Nothing I say or do seems to help!”
- **Frustrated/angry:** “Why are they like this when I’m doing my best?”
- **Overwhelmed:** “I don’t know how to make things better.”
- **Alienated:** “I don’t know how to relate to this experience.”
- **Unsure about how or when to help:** “Am I interfering or helping?”
- **A loss of support:** “The person used to always be there for me…”

Looking after yourself and your own health is really important and will help you be the best support for your partner, family/whanau member or friend. Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling.



If you are worried about your partner, family/whanau member or friend, encourage them to talk with their midwife, doctor or other person they trust.

Remember to take care of yourself: Having support in your role as a carer is important.

If you are worried about their safety please do not leave them alone. Stay with them and seek medical help from your midwife, doctor, or mental health team.

Accept offers of help from family/whanau or friends - accepting help is a sign of strength not weakness.

Call 111 if you are concerned about their immediate safety.

Anxiety and depression are genuine illnesses. Try not to take any ‘out of character’ behaviour personally, it is not their fault - or yours.

Provide practical help and gentle emotional support. Be guided by the person you are supporting as to how much, and what sort of help, they need.

You are the support person, not the health professional. You don’t need to give medical advice or make treatment decisions. Make sure the person you’re caring for has supportive medical advice.

Support them at medical appointments. Ask if they want this kind of help or someone to discuss treatment options with. Try not to be judgmental about their decisions, particularly around medication.