

## Be kind to yourself

Trying to block out thoughts and feelings can fuel our struggle and amplify anxiety. Fighting the anxiety just makes us more anxious. Instead, accept your feelings and thoughts, and hold them lightly, being kind to yourself. The kindness that Jacinda asked us to practice, needs to go to ourselves as well. Try to acknowledge what you are feeling and make space for big feelings with some deep breaths.

It is important to keep talking to your partner/ support person at home. These are hard times for everyone, talk to them about how they are doing, what is going well and what can be improved. How can you work together to meet your needs and theirs? How do you give each other alone time too?

## Supporting other tamariki

If you have other kids at home, these times are even more challenging. They will be struggling as well. Depending on their age, they may not have the vocabulary to explain or understand it all. Expect behavioural issues in children and try respond gently. We are all struggling with disruption in routine, none more than children, who rely on routines constructed by others to make them feel safe and to know what comes next.

Expect increased anxiety, worries and fears, nightmares, difficulty separating or sleeping, testing limits, and meltdowns. Focus on emotional connection, safety and attachment. Try follow their lead, through physical touch, through play, through books and music, offer verbal reassurance that you will be there for them. Enjoy their cuddles and get your Oxytocin refill from them as well.

## Midwifery care during pregnancy and postnatally

The Ministry of Health has explained that community-based midwifery care will be affected by COVID-19 and midwives will do as much as possible over the phone or via video calling. As the situation changes quickly, it is best to visit the Ministry of Health or College of Midwives websites for the most accurate and up to date information. You will also be able to find out how you will be cared for if you are in isolation or have a confirmed case of COVID-19.

[www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

[www.midwife.org.nz](http://www.midwife.org.nz)

## Contact Us

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Take each chunk one at a time, and move through stress in pieces.

In moments of uncertainty and overwhelm, control your little corner of the world.

If you are having difficulty coping, reach out for help. There are mental health people who are ready to help you.



Data in this publication sourced from:

- ACT – Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
- Eileen Feliciano | NYS Psychologist, <http://www.sfu.ca/olc/blog/my-ssp/mental-health-wellness-tips-quarantine>



# Pregnancy and birth during the pandemic

These are certainly unprecedented and challenging times for everyone in our country (and the world!) and if you are pregnant it can be especially stressful.

It is already so hard being at home, separated from our friends, our communities, our work-places and our wider whanau. It's so hard not being able to go out and do the things we usually do. Everything has changed.

And you are facing the added fear of being on your own in hospital, if your partner is not allowed to stay with you, as is the current situation in many maternity units across the country. And after that, your midwife will need to provide care in a different way, until things change. This might mean you feel even more worried, scared and alone.

You might have been looking forward to your family from another city or country to come help and support you when baby arrives and now they might not be able to come. You might have been looking forward to spending time with other new mums and babies, and now we don't know when that will happen. So many unknowns, so many crashed dreams and so many challenges.

## Learning to cope from within

This is a real, challenging, situation, and we have to find ways to cope within.

We have to learn to accept what we can't change (the pandemic and its' effects on our daily lives) and to try and see what we can still control. We need to still commit to our values - things like love and care for ourselves and each other, for our baby that's coming soon and compassion for those working hard trying to take care of us. We have to learn to act accordingly, taking actions that will lead us to cope.



## PADA

Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Aotearoa is the national organisation committed to eliminating the stigma around perinatal mental health in New Zealand. We do this by championing awareness and facilitating best practice in perinatal mental health and wellbeing to ensure all families/whanau have access to appropriate information and support.

This resource was prepared by PADA educator, Liora Noy, who is supported by funding from ZONTA. It is freely available to assist in raising awareness of perinatal anxiety and distress during the pandemic and to help whanau identify coping strategies.

## BACE is a good way to cope

One way to do this is using BACE daily, trying to do one of each (B, A, C, E) every day:

- **B - activities that take care of your Body** - Exercise as allowed, sleep, good nutrition, all things that are so important to every pregnant woman are even more important now. Try to take a few short walks every day, even if it is raining. If you are concerned about contact, try first thing in the morning, or later in the evening, and try less travelled streets. Focus on going to sleep every night at the same time, and turn off devices at least an hour before bed time. It can be addictive to stay glued to the news and social media, but it is not good for you or your baby. You need sleep, so best to unhook from all that an hour before bed time and do some quiet reading, talk to your partner, listen to music or practice mindfulness. Try to nourish your body with the healthy foods that you and your baby need.
- **A - activities that give you a sense of Accomplishment** - Work from home if you can, bake something yummy for you and your partner. Take up a sewing, crochet or knitting project, making something for your baby. There is now time to learn something new - learn a craft or take up a hobby!
- **C - activities that Connect you with important people in your lives** - Get in touch with friends, parents, and your extended whanau. This can be done by calling them daily or using messaging/Skype/Zoom, or something similar to have group video chats. Send photos and videos of your expanding belly and your new baby to everyone to stay connected and get the support and love you need.
- **E- activities for Enjoyment** - Finding ways to still have joy! Can you put on some music and dance or sway? Can you listen to your favourite music? Can you sing? Can you draw? Can you read? Or just make sure you watch something funny on Netflix every day?

Try to do one of each for at least half hour every day, commit to that and it will make things a bit better.

## Some other ideas you could try

### Develop a self-care toolkit

This can look different for everyone. A lot of successful self-care strategies involve a sensory component, vestibular (movement) and proprioceptive (comforting pressure). Ideas: a soft blanket or stuffed animal, a hot chocolate, photos of holidays, comforting music, lavender or eucalyptus oil, rocking chair, a weighted blanket. A journal, an inspirational book, or a mandala colouring book is wonderful, bubbles to blow or blowing watercolor on paper through a straw are visually appealing as well as work on controlled breath. For children, it is great to help them create a self-regulation comfort box (often a shoebox or bin they can decorate) that they can use on the ready for first-aid when overwhelmed.

### Look for things you can control

In moments of uncertainty and overwhelm, control your little corner of the world. Organise your bookshelf, purge your cupboards, group your toys. It helps to anchor and ground us when the bigger things are chaotic.



### Cut down on news

Limit social media and COVID-19 conversation, especially around children. There is tons of information to consume, and it changes minute by minute. But information is often sensationalised, negatively skewed, and alarmist. Find a few trusted sources that you can check in with consistently, limit it to a few times a day, and set a time limit for yourself on how much you consume (30 minutes tops, two to three times daily). Keep news and alarming conversations away from children - they see and hear everything, and can become frightened by what they hear.

### Take it moment by moment

"Chunk" your lock down, take it moment by moment. We have no road map for this. We don't know what this will look like one week, or one month from now. Try make it more manageable, whether that be five minutes, a day, or a week at a time - find what feels doable for you, and set a time stamp for how far ahead in the future you will let yourself worry. Take each chunk one at a time, and move through stress in pieces.

### This is temporary

Remind yourself daily that this is temporary. It may seem like it will never end. It is scary to think of the road stretching ahead of us. Please take time to remind yourself that although this is difficult, and we don't know when it will end, it is a season of life and it will pass. We will return to being free, safe, busy, and connected in the days ahead.

### Reach out for help

There are people for you! If you have a counsellor, they are available even at a distance. Keep up your medications and your therapy sessions the best you can. If you are having difficulty coping, seek out help for the first time. There are mental health people on the ready to help you through this crisis.

Kia Kaha - remind yourself that this is temporary

### Need to talk?

**1737**

Free call or text any time for support from a trained counsellor

**0800 111 757 or free text 4202**

Free call or text the Depression Helpline to talk to a trained counsellor about how you are feeling or to ask any questions

Call or text your midwife

## What the numbers tell us

THE NUMBER OF BIRTHS IN NEW ZEALAND IN 2019:

**59,637**

THE PERCENTAGE OF FATHERS WHO EXPERIENCE DEPRESSION DURING THEIR PARTNERS' PREGNANCY:

**2.3%**

THE PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO CAN EXPERIENCE HIGH LEVELS OF DEPRESSION AFTER CHILDBIRTH:

**4.3%**

PERCENTAGE OF PREGNANT WOMEN WITH SEVERE DEPRESSION:

**12%**

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHO SUFFER WITH DEPRESSION IN PREGNANCY WHO DEVELOP POSTNATAL DEPRESSION:

**50%**