

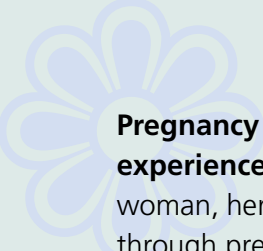


YOUR

mental WELLBEING

IN PREGNANCY

A Brief Guide



Pregnancy and childbirth are major life-changing experiences and can bring about many emotional changes to a woman, her partner and the rest of the family. Most women go through pregnancy and the first year after giving birth without any psychological problems. However some women do go on to experience problems such as anxiety or depression. These conditions are extremely common for everybody, but they can develop differently during your pregnancy as you juggle the emotional, social, financial and physical demands of a baby and family life. You may feel down or more anxious than usual but don't suffer alone - your midwife, health visitor or GP will be able to support and advise you. **Remember that most women make a full recovery.**

This leaflet will give you more information about your mental wellbeing during pregnancy and describe what help is available.

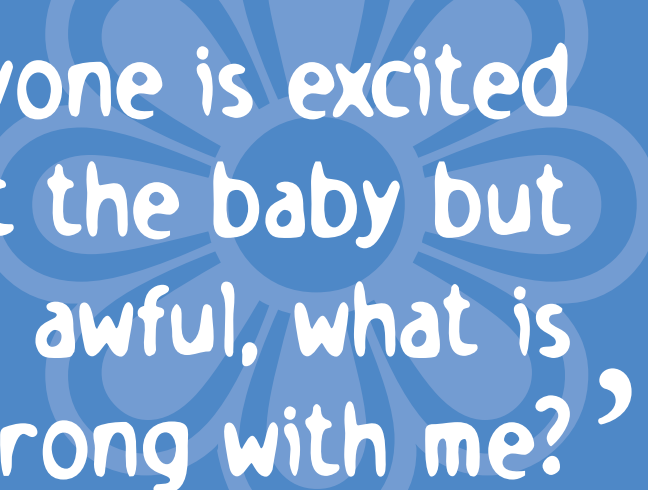


Q. How will I know what to look for?

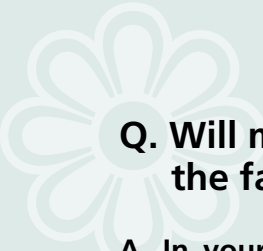
A. What to look out for:

- Feeling worried
- Weepy or tearful
- Feeling anxious or irritable
- Feeling sad
- Having negative thoughts, for example: 'I can't cope with having a baby', 'Having a baby is not fantastic like I expected', 'People are critical of me as a mother'
- Having thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- Sleeping problems
- Difficulty concentrating
- Lack of interest in things
- Loss of energy
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling isolated

Some of these feelings are normal in pregnancy, however if these feelings continue or get worse please speak to your midwife, health visitor or GP.



'Everyone is excited about the baby but I feel awful, what is wrong with me?'



Q. Will my health professionals pick up on the fact that I am not feeling well...?

A. In your pregnancy you will be routinely asked the following questions about your mental wellbeing by your healthcare professional e.g. midwife, health visitor or GP.


- During the last month, have you been bothered by feeling down depressed or hopeless?
- During the last month, have you been bothered by having little interest or pleasure in doing things?

If you have answered yes to either of these questions you may then be asked,

- Is this something you feel you need or want help with?



Q. What kind of help is out there?



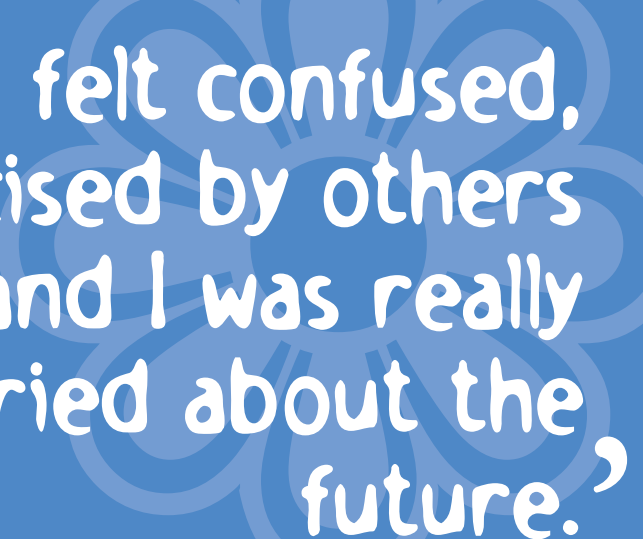
A. Once you have discussed your feelings with someone, you can both explore what help is available and decide what would work best for you. Sometimes it can be simple things that can make a difference, for example:

- Talking to your partner, family or friend
- Exercise e.g. aqua natal, walking
- Social groups e.g. baby massage, relaxation
- Internet sites and chat rooms
- Talking to your midwife, health visitor or GP


Ask your health professional about how to get information and support in your area, or enquire at your local library.

You or your health professional might feel you need more than that, if so there are other types of help available:

- Counselling for you and your partner
- Medication
- Care from a mental health professional



‘I felt confused, criticised by others and I was really worried about the future.’



These are some other examples of questions you may want to ask your health care professional:

- Do other people feel like this?
- Will my baby be ok?
- What can help?
- Who can I talk to?
- Will I need medication?
- What support is available for me and my family?

If you already have a mental health problem such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or depression diagnosed and treated by a doctor, you need to contact your midwife, health visitor or GP as early as possible in pregnancy so that the best care for you and your baby can be discussed and planned (for example changing medication or offering further treatment).

Remember

Mental health problems can affect anyone at anytime. If you are feeling down or finding things difficult please talk to your midwife, health visitor or GP for advice, help and support.

Help is available, please ask!

‘My mood fluctuated all over the place. One minute I was happy, the next I would be crying my eyes out.’



How can I help myself?

Remember that help is available and there are also steps that you can take to help yourself:

Talk about your feelings with your partner, friends or other mothers to be, share experiences.

Say how you feel e.g. miserable, irritable, frightened.

Make sure you are eating a healthy diet.

Gentle exercise such as walking or swimming can be helpful.

Make time for yourself.

Don't put pressure on yourself to do everything.

Take up any offers of practical help e.g. collecting children from school.

Get as much rest as you can.

Try not to be alone all day, every day.

Ask your midwife or health visitor about any local groups.

Remember that you will feel better.



‘Talking things through helped me to gain control of my life again.’



If you need further advice, information or help contact:

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)

www.nct.org.uk

Association for Postnatal Depression

www.apni.org

Surestart

www.surestart.gov.uk

Net Mums

www.netmums.com

NHS Direct

0845 4647

Samaritans

0845 790 9090

Mind

www.mind.org.uk

Saneline

0845 767 8000



Ask your midwife, health visitor or GP for further information on local groups and sources of help and support. Note them here:

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a blue border, intended for users to write down contact information for local support groups.

