

Your midwife, health visitor or GP can give you information about free psychological therapy services in your local area. Below are some useful service contacts that might help:

Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust First Response team 01274 221 181 - this 24/7 service is for people of all ages living in Bradford, Airedale, Wharfedale and Craven who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

Bradford Families' Information Service - Tel: 01274 434905 or text RS on 07781472975 for a call back - can tell you about a children centre near you that can offer advice and support families of children under 5.

Women's Aid 0808 2000 247 - advocacy, refuge and support for women and children affected by domestic abuse.

Tax Credits - 0345 300 3900 - practical and financial advice tax credit helpline, information, guidance and contacts about tax credit.

Netmums.com - this website provides access to a network of mums in your local area.

Bradford & Airedale Branch of the National Childbirth Trust Charity 0800 330 0700 - provides information, helplines and support groups.

Citizen's Advice Bureau 03442 451 282 - offering free advice on benefits, work, housing and the law.

Bradford District Care Trust's Specialist Mother and Baby Mental Health Service - provides advice and support to women with a history of or current severe mental health issue. Discuss a referral with your health professional.

Tips for dad, partners, family and friends

Accept that the mum is experiencing difficulties and resist the urge to pressure her to feel happier than she really does.

Encourage her to talk to someone if she is finding things difficult.

Share the running of the house and the chores associated with the baby.

Give her time to rest.

Point out things she is doing well.

Do something that makes her feel valued.

Try to ensure she has company as much as possible if she is disliking being alone.

Understand that her feelings of depression or anxiety are temporary and she needs your support.

Remind her that she will feel better.

Take the baby out for a walk.

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New baby new feelings





Having a baby is a time of change. You may experience a mixture of feelings. Perhaps you'll feel overjoyed but later feel overwhelmed. It's normal to have unhappy or anxious feelings as well as happy ones.

It can be hard to imagine the impact that having a baby will have on you. Caring for somebody 24 hours a day, every day, is a huge responsibility. Perhaps you have changed from being a single woman or a couple to becoming a family; you'll need time to adjust to this. If you've a child already you may be surprised by how much impact another baby has on your family and your feelings of coping.

Spending a lot of time alone with the baby can be all-consuming. It can seem difficult to find the time to get dressed let alone be able to go out, yet going out and meeting other people can be very helpful. Make it a priority to do things that stop you feeling isolated.

Remember it's normal to feel tired, confused and find it difficult to cope when you're not having enough sleep. Your baby may want to be with you all the time, and may cry if you put them down even for a very short time. It can be hugely stressful if you find that your baby cries a lot. It can also be very distressing if you want to breastfeed but find it painful or difficult at first.

Some women fall in love with their babies from the moment of birth, and some women find that their love grows slowly over the first few weeks as they get to know and care for their baby. Both ways are normal. If you don't feel anything at all for your baby, or are worried about how you're feeling, talk to your midwife, health visitor or GP.

Seek urgent help

A very small number of women experience more serious symptoms after their birth including: hallucinations, highly irrational thoughts or extreme agitation. If you've these problems it's very important to seek help immediately by contacting your GP, health visitor, midwife or ring our **First Response Service on 01274 221 181**.

Severe mental health issues

If you have had severe mental health issues in the past tell your GP, health visitor or midwife and ask for a plan to be put in place to support you.

Stress

Dizziness, racing heart, sweatiness, shortness of breath and shakiness are normal symptoms of stress. They're also indicators that it would be good for you to resolve the issues which are worrying you. Speak to a health professional about services which could help you.

The baby blues

About half of all mums experience the 'baby blues' which is a feeling of sadness, tearfulness, confusion and anxiety. It comes on a few days after the birth but goes within a week or two.

Postnatal Depression (PND) and Postnatal Anxiety

This is where you experience a number of difficult feelings over a few weeks or longer. It's normal to experience some mild anxiety or low feelings some of the time. About 10-15% of women experience postnatal depression, and about 11% of women experience anxiety. Ask your health professional for help.

Some reasons why you may feel depressed or anxious after having a baby

- Difficulties in relationships
- Isolation/loneliness
- Unrealistic expectations
- History of depression or anxiety problems
- Realisation of the responsibility of parenthood
- Lack of support
- Childhood experiences
- Recent stressful event
- Changes in hormones

New baby new feelings

The feelings associated with postnatal depression and anxiety include:

- A persistent feeling of sadness and low mood.
- Loss of interest in the world around you and no longer enjoying things that used to give you pleasure.
- Lack of energy and feeling tired all the time.
- Trouble sleeping at night and feeling sleepy during the day.
- Feeling that you're unable to look after your baby.
- Problems concentrating and making decisions.
- Loss of appetite or an increased appetite (comfort eating).
- Feeling agitated, irritable or very apathetic (you 'can't be bothered').
- Feelings of guilt, hopelessness and self-blame.
- Difficulty bonding with your baby with a feeling of indifference and no sense of enjoyment in his or her company.
- Frightening thoughts – for example about hurting your baby; these can be scary, but they're very rarely acted upon.
- Thinking about suicide and self-harm.
- Constant worry.
- Feeling that something bad is going to happen.
- Racing thoughts.
- Disturbances of sleep and appetite.
- Inability to sit still.
- Physical symptoms like dizziness, hot flashes and nausea.

Asking for help

If you (or someone close to you) are worried about how you're feeling, talk to your health visitor, midwife or doctor. They will be able to discuss with you what could be done to help. This may include talking to a therapist, support/social groups or antidepressant medication, all of which can help you to feel more able to cope with you difficult feelings.

You're more likely to feel better if you seek support. Asking for help is best for you and your baby. It won't make you a bad mother and it won't mean you've failed.

Whether you feel a little low or you're wondering whether you've postnatal depression or anxiety it's important to take care of yourself. Taking care of yourself will make things better for you and your baby.

Rest

Rest is vital for keeping you healthy. What activities do you find truly restful? When could you do one or two of them?



Relax

Wear warm clothes and make sure you're sitting or lying comfortably. Start by breathing slowly in through your mouth. Often when we're not relaxed we breathe quickly. Slowing our breathing can gradually help us feel better. To help check how deeply you're breathing place one hand on your stomach and one on your chest. As you breathe in, feel your stomach swell outwards, filling with air and try to keep your chest still. Repeat the deep breaths three times. Close your eyes and begin to visualize a calm scene. See the beauty of the colours of the sky, there is no wind, no sound, complete calm. Allow your mind to create this scene for you, it may be somewhere you know or a place you have created. Allow yourself to relax with this image for a few minutes, keeping your breathing deep and slow. Then stretch your fingers and toes and allow yourself to become aware of the room you're in once again.

Exercise

Gentle exercise can help you feel less worn out and sleep better. Taking the baby for a walk is good for you both. Also, ensuring you've a balanced diet can help to reduce feelings of depression, especially if you're breast feeding.

Talk

Sharing your worries and difficulties can ease the pressure they put on you. This could be with a friend, family member, health visitor, midwife, doctor, counsellor or therapist.

Accept help

Letting other people help with the chores will reduce some of the pressure on you.

Baby massage

Your health visitor or midwife will be able to tell you about your local group. Baby massage helps bonding and is something you can enjoy with your baby.

Groups

Building a network of other mums allows you to talk to people who understand about the experiences you're having and will help you feel less alone.

Express yourself

Notice the feelings you're having and think of ways to let them out. These may be crying, laughing, drawing or writing.

Sleep

Sleeping when your baby sleeps is a good way to get rest. A trusted friend or family member could look after the baby one night so you can get a much needed full night's sleep.

Something for you

Take time to do something for you, for example, a bubble bath, a trip out, see a friend, its not selfish and everyone can benefit.

Relax by breathing

This method has one simple rule - exhale for double the amount of time you inhale. But simply, if you breathe in and count to four seconds, you should then slowly exhale and count to eight seconds as you do it. By following this technique, it slows down the heart rate and relaxes the muscles, similar to when the body enters or sleeps and ultimately restores calm.



If you've a partner

Communicate

Talking with your partner, friends or family member about how you're feeling can help your relationships. Using 'I' instead of 'you' statements can help, e.g. saying 'I feel I am doing more than my fair share' could be more productive than 'you're not doing enough'.

Share and be together

If you've a partner talk to him/her about who is responsible for which household and baby jobs to reduce the risk of feeling resentful towards each other. Also, by accepting help from other people you and your partner can have a chance to be alone together to enjoy each other's company.

Stop domestic abuse

If you're experiencing physical or mental abuse talk to your health visitor or contact Women's Aid.

Start afresh

Start each day as a new day. Look at a new day as an opportunity to start afresh, if things have been difficult or overwhelming the day before.