

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 small number of women experience very 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: 0800 952 1181.**

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 can be 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 two weeks.

Birth Trauma

Some women have a birth experience that they find stays very disturbing. There is a range of help on offer, including a birth debrief and therapeutic interventions.

Postnatal Depression (PND) and Postnatal Anxiety

Whilst some anxiety or short periods of low feelings are normal, postnatal depression is where you experience a number of difficult feelings over a few weeks or longer. 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, a referral to a mental health team, support/social groups or antidepressant medication. The right support will help you feel more able to cope with your 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.

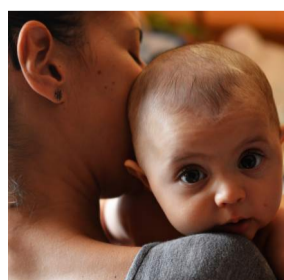
Whether you feel a little low or you're wondering whether you've postnatal depression or anxiety it's important to take care of yourself. Taking care of yourself will make things better for you and your baby.

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

Add things into your day which help you relax. Simple things such as a cup of tea, a rest on the sofa, a walk outside can help. If you have people who care about you around you, you may find it useful to take a break from being with baby. Notice tension in your body and take a moment to release this.



Relax through breathing

You may find this breathing method helps as it can calm the brain:

This calming breathing technique for stress, anxiety and panic takes just a few minutes and can be done anywhere.

You will get the most benefit if you do it regularly, as part of your daily routine.

You can do it standing up, sitting in a chair that supports your back, or lying on a bed or yoga mat on the floor.

Make yourself as comfortable as you can. If you can, loosen any clothes that restrict your breathing.

If you're lying down, place your arms a little bit away from your sides, with the palms up. Let your legs be straight, or bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor.

If you're sitting, place your arms on the chair arms.

If you're sitting or standing, place both feet flat on the ground. Whatever position you're in, place your feet roughly hip-width apart.

Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it.

Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from 1 to 5. You may not be able to reach 5 at first. Hold it for a moment.

Then let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again if you find this helpful.

Keep doing this for a few minutes, aim for 5 minutes.

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. Accept help from others that you trust and value. People are often very happy, and want, to help.

Skin to skin contact with your baby

Holding your baby against your skin will give you the chance to rest and get to know each other. It can help with bonding, releases oxytocin in both of you, which can help you both feel happier, calmer and safer.

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. It's not selfish and everyone can benefit. Focus on things that give you a sense of connection, pleasure and accomplishment. Simple things are worthwhile prioritising and can help your well-being



Treat yourself with compassion

You are experiencing a huge change. Imagine what you would say to a friend and try to treat yourself with the same kindness.

If you have a partner

Communicate

It can help your relationship to talk about how you are feeling. You may be feeling low or anxious and it can help your others understand you if you share this.

If you are finding something difficult it can be useful to use 'I' statements e.g. 'I feel like I am struggling as I am doing so many chores whilst looking after a new baby' could be more productive than 'you are not doing enough'.

Share and be together

Try to make sure you do something together that is pleasurable so you have an opportunity to enjoy each other's company. This may be a small thing, such as having a cup of tea together, or a short walk with baby.

If you have 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.

Stop domestic abuse

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

Start afresh

If things have been difficult or overwhelming the day before, look to the new day as an opportunity to start afresh. It is easy to notice the bad bits in the day, spend some time before going to sleep noting what went well or ok, maybe write these down. Treat each day as a new day.

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 0800 952 1181 - 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 437503 or text FIS 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.

Bradford South Family Hub

2 Bedale Dr, Bradford · 01274 434940

Bradford West Family Hub

Farcliffe, 56 Toller Lane, Bradford, BD8 8QH 01274 436700

Bradford EAST Family Hub

365 Barkerend Road, Bradford BD3 8QX 01274 437523

Keighley and Shipley Family Hub

Braithwaite Grove, Keighley BD22 6JB 01535 618005

Health Visitors

Your health visiting team is there to support you on your parenting journey. To contact us call 01274 221223.

There is also a website with lots of useful information:

<https://www.betterliveshealthyfuturesbw.nhs.uk>

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

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/>

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 0300 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. <https://www.bdct.nhs.uk/services/specialist-mother-baby-mental-health-service/>

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 or have a break.

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.

Help her to get some sleep, this is essential for mental health.

Support her to have some moments of pleasure. Simple moments of pleasure are valuable.

Take time to build your relationship with baby.

If you are worried that the mother is experiencing a mental health crisis, contact First Response 0800 952 1181

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