



Adjusting to Motherhood

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Difficulty adjusting to a new baby in your life

Adjusting to a new baby in the house can be challenging. A new baby brings about significant, often unexpected, changes in your life, not only learning how to look after the baby, lack of sleep but also a change in what you are able to do in your life, particularly while your child is very young. All parents go through a period of adjustment and for most parents this is usually a temporary phase. All babies are different and some are a lot easier to manage than others. For some parents adjusting to life with a baby is stressful and goes on for a long period of time. If this sounds like what you are experiencing with your new baby it can be helpful to talk to a health professional.

Bonding issues with your new baby



While emotional bonding with your baby is important it doesn't always happen instantly. This may leave parents feeling disappointed, guilty and stressed. With support and rest, the feeling of connection with your baby usually develops within a few days or weeks.



Parents who are not feeling bonded with their baby may be distant and withdrawn from their baby. If after a couple of weeks you still haven't bonded with your baby it is important to talk with a health professional about how you are feeling because emotional bonding is important to your baby's development.

Depression and anxiety in pregnancy and as a new mother

Often the time of pregnancy and a new baby brings expectations of joy, but in reality this isn't always the case. It is important that women, families, health professionals and communities talk openly about low mood or other emotional problems.

Research indicates that around 12% of women become depressed during pregnancy and 15% experience postnatal depression. During pregnancy and after having a baby 10% of women will have significant anxiety. If left untreated depression and anxiety can have a negative impact on mothers, babies and families.

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Depression and anxiety signs and symptoms

The sign and symptoms of depression during pregnancy and following birth are the same as experienced at other times in life and can range from mild to severe. It is important to seek the help of a health professional if you are experiencing some of the following symptoms for more than a few days, to assess whether you are experiencing depression:

- Low mood and often feeling tearful
- Feeling inadequate, worthless, hopeless, helpless, like a failure, guilty, ashamed, empty or sad
- Feeling resentful, angry or irritated (especially by those close to you)
- Fearful for the baby, of the baby, being alone with the baby, going out with the baby
- Sleeping too much or having difficulty sleeping
- Not eating or eating too much
- Difficulty coping with daily routine, not looking after yourself properly
- Lack of motivation, lack of energy or feeling exhausted
- Withdrawing from family and friends and activities you usually enjoy
- Poor concentration and memory
- Difficulty making decisions or thinking clearly
- Feeling overwhelmed, wanting to escape or get away from everything
- Thinking about harming yourself or taking your own life.

Support & resources

If you are feeling down or anxious you should talk with your Midwife, Child and Family Health Nurse, GP, obstetrician or another professional involved in the care of you and your baby. They can help make sure you get support and help to feel better.

You may also access support via telephone help lines or websites. Some are local to South Australia and some are national. Confidentiality and safety is always respected with the highest importance.

PANDA - Postnatal and Antenatal Depression Association: 1300 726 306

beyondblue:1300 224 636

Child and Youth Health Parent helpline: 1300 364 100

Pregnancy birth and baby helpline: 1800 882 436

Lifeline:13 11 14