

Taking care of your emotional wellbeing before, during and after pregnancy

Information for patients



Emotional changes are common in pregnancy and after birth

Pregnancy and having a baby can be emotionally challenging at times, but there are things you can do to help yourself.



Whether your pregnancy was planned or unplanned, it's natural to have mixed emotions about it. You may swing from excited to worried, or happy to sad and back again. Pregnancy hormones can contribute to giving you this mix of emotional highs and lows, especially in the first three months.

Having a baby changes a lot of things and it can be common to worry about the future and how life might change.

How do I know if my emotional wellbeing is a concern for me?

Good emotional health does not mean that you'll always feel pleasant, or that feelings of sadness won't surface. It is normal to have periods of worry and stress when you are pregnant, but for some people these feelings don't go away and this can be a sign you may want to consider reaching out for help.



"...I found myself getting angry first, being upset and crying almost every day. I didn't find joy in the everyday things, I just thought I was tired, being pregnant and having a toddler..."

"...I told some family members I felt low... they suggested I should pray more and get closer to God"



"I knew something wasn't right, I felt like I wasn't myself, not acting right, not feeling right, I couldn't connect with my son....I didn't understand what was going on, but I pushed through thinking I was just tired, having 2 little ones and it will pass...but it didn't".



"I constantly worried there was something seriously wrong with me? I didn't feel like myself and worried if I could be a good mother?"

"...I was hit with a wave of emotions... I didn't feel like I was having a connection with my baby that was growing inside me like I did with my first. But I just pushed my feelings to the side, thinking that the connection and bond will come in time".



What can I do to support my own emotional wellbeing?

Share your worries

Talking to people about how you feel can be a huge relief and help remind you that you're not alone. You'll probably find that other people are having similar experiences and you may get some good ideas about how to deal with any problems. You may also find it helpful to talk to your midwife or doctor about how you feel.

Look after yourself

Eating a healthy diet, enjoying regular exercise and getting plenty of sleep can help us to feel our best and help us to better cope with what life has to throw at us.

Lean on your community

Find out what is going on in your local community to support your wellbeing. For some this might be about attending places of worship, maintaining spirituality, volunteering, being part of groups and causes that make you feel good.

Make a wellbeing plan

The Tommy's online health and wellbeing planning tool helps you start thinking about how you feel and what support you might need in your pregnancy and after the birth: [The Pregnancy and Post-birth Wellbeing Plan | Tommy's \(tommys.org\)](https://www.tommys.org)

Tackle stressful issues one at a time

If you're feeling stressed, try to break your worries down and tackle them one at a time, starting with the ones you have some control over.

Find out the facts and information you need

Sometimes we get anxious and stressed about things we don't know much about and can fear the unknown. Getting good information about pregnancy and birth can help you feel more confident and in control.

Reach out for help and support if you need it.

It can be difficult to accept that you're feeling low at a time when everyone expects you to feel happy and excited. Try to remember that emotional problems in pregnancy, such as depression and anxiety, are common, so you're not alone. Tell your midwife or doctor how you feel. They can help you find the right treatment and support so you can take care of yourself and your baby.

Seeking Help



“If you feel something is not right trust your gut, ask for help, connect with like-minded people, don’t listen to the negative comments, get the help you need, get the help you deserve. Get better for yourself”. Hikmat, Leeds.

“The most difficult part and the reason it took me a long time to finally speak to my midwife is due to the stigma around mental health...as a woman of colour and from a Nigerian background, I’m supposed to be strong, resilient and just get on with things, so I assumed it was normal to feel this way as long as “I get on with it”. Breaking down in my community is perceived as weak, letting myself and my family down. I didn’t plan on speaking out on the day that I did. My midwife asked if I was ok, and I burst into tears before I could stop myself”. Ngozi, Leeds.

“As women and mothers we are taught to push through to be the tough one that puts her own needs aside to be able to give to others. But...you are not less of a person if you feel like something is not right, you don't have to push these feelings to the side, you are important, and it is okay to ask for help!“. Hikmat, Leeds.

“Mental health is very much not recognised in the Asian community as it's a taboo topic.....the 'Diverse Mums Group' through the perinatal service offered emotional support and connected me with others I could relate to on a cultural level“. Farzana, Leeds.

Help is available in many forms

Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service

During pregnancy and in the first year after birth, women and their partners can experience a range of mental health difficulties. Wellbeing support is prioritised for parents (including dads, same sex couples and main carers) who are either expecting a child or have a child up to one year old.

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust - Refer Yourself
<https://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services-a-z/leeds-mental-wellbeing-service/refer-yourself/>

Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's Single Point of Access (SPA)

The SPA accepts referrals for anyone requiring an urgent mental health assessment. Call 0800 183 1485 (If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can text 07983 323867).

Further information and support:

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust - Perinatal Support

<https://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services-a-z/leeds-mental-wellbeing-service/what-we-offer/perinatal-support/>

Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust - Perinatal Mental Health Service

The Leeds Perinatal Mental Health Service provides specialist support to people experiencing significant mental health difficulties during pregnancy and the first year following a child's birth.

<https://www.leedsandyorkpft.nhs.uk/our-services/perinatal-mental-health-service/>

Mental health before, during and after pregnancy | Tommy's

<https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/im-pregnant/mental-wellbeing/mental-health-during-and-after-pregnancy>

5 ways to survive stress in pregnancy | Tommy's

<https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/im-pregnant/mental-wellbeing/5-ways-survive-stress-pregnancy>

MindWell Leeds

MindWell Leeds is a mental health website offering support and information to help people take care of their emotional wellbeing.

<https://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/>

MindMate

MindMate Leeds was designed with young people, for young people, to provide a central place for information about common mental health issues and where to find support.

<https://www.mindmate.org.uk/>

Leeds Community Health Infant Mental Health Service

Early relationships matter. There are many reasons why individuals might find bonding with their baby difficult. The Leeds Infant Mental Health Service aims to promote emotional wellbeing in infants by supporting caregivers to build secure relationships with their babies.

<https://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services-a-z/0-19-public-health-integrated-nursing/infant-mental-health/>

Home-Start Leeds

Home-Start Leeds is a voluntary organisation offering both emotional and practical support to families with at least one child under seven in the Leeds area.

<https://www.home-startleeds.co.uk/>

Leeds Women's Counselling and Therapy Service

The Women's Counselling and Therapy Service offer a free, or low-cost, counselling and psychotherapy service for women and girls on low incomes in Leeds.

<https://www.womenstherapyleeds.org.uk/>



What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/nhsleedsfft

Your views matter



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