



**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand

**Your emotional wellbeing  
during pregnancy and beyond**

# Time to focus on you for a moment

Being pregnant, welcoming your baby and becoming a parent are life-changing events. Having a baby can be an exciting and emotional time. This change in your life and the lives of your whānau can make you feel overwhelmed and may, in some cases, affect your mental health.

An important way to prepare for this is to focus what you need to keep yourself well. There are four areas you can focus on - physical health, spiritual health, family health and mental health.

**Physical health** – eat healthy food, drink water, exercise at least a little every day and aim for periods of good quality sleep. Don't take on too much and, if you are working, aim to stop at least one month before your baby is due.

**Spiritual health** – take time each day to sit quietly and be in the moment. Pray, meditate or practice mindfulness. Sit or walk outside alone and take time to reflect.

**Whānau health** – when you become a mum, the relationships with your loved ones can change. Build your support network; think about your relationships and whether they are strong and supportive? Know who your support people are and let them know.

**Mental health** – be kind to yourself, accept that your moods change and you have good days and bad days. Don't expect too much of yourself, no one is perfect. Celebrate every little success. If you are feeling down, let people know and talk about how you are feeling.



## Normal feelings

It's normal to have a wide range of emotions during your pregnancy, including feeling unsure, anxious, or worried.

Not everyone falls in love with their new baby straight away. Some women feel delighted while others feel overwhelmed; both emotions are normal. Having a new baby can be tough and you can quickly become sleep-deprived, so it's pretty normal to feel emotional.

Not coping and feeling overwhelmed all the time after a couple of weeks may be a bigger problem than you think. It's time to get extra help.

## If you are not ok

About one in ten women have depression or anxiety at some stage in their pregnancy or after baby is born.

In Māori and Pasifika cultures, it is as many as three in ten women.

About one in ten partners are also affected, so check in with them regularly.

## Things to look out for

Feeling low

Even small tasks  
seem  
overwhelming

Thinking the same  
things over and  
over

Feeling, worthless,  
guilty or ashamed

Overeating or not  
hungry at all

Unable to sleep or  
sleeping all the  
time

Not enjoying your  
usual activities

Feeling like you  
are not bonding  
with your baby

These are signs that you are not doing as well as you hoped and it's time to start talking to your support people and your health professionals about getting help.

# Trauma after birth

For some women, negative feelings about their birth experience can become intrusive and disturbing. It is normal to remember and reflect on giving birth but it is not usual for these thoughts to continually interrupt your daily life. Repetitive disturbing and intrusive thoughts may be a sign of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and this needs to be treated in order for you to start to recover.

## How to get help

If you are not ok, or if you are worried about your partner, or if your friends and whānau are worried about you - **ASK FOR HELP**.

Please talk to your midwife, GP or Well Child (Plunket) nurse. They can help you find the care that you need to help you feel better and to help keep you well.

We have women's health social workers who can talk to you about how you are feeling and connect you with ongoing support, if needed. We also have cultural support workers, if you need to talk to someone who understands your culture.

We have a specialist maternal mental health team that can support you if you become increasingly unwell.

If you are having thoughts of harming yourself or your baby, get help immediately. You can call your midwife, or the mental health crisis team and they will help you straight away.

Family violence has a huge effect on your emotional and mental health. There is a lot of help available. Please speak with your midwife or LMC or see the resources page of this pamphlet if this is part of your life.

# Resources

<https://www.heartsandminds.org.nz/>

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/mental-health-specialty/waitemata-dhb-maternal-mental-health-service/>

<https://depression.org.nz/>

<https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/d/depression-perinatal/>

<https://pada.nz/>

<https://www.mothershelpers.co.nz>

<http://www.areyouok.org.nz/> or 0800 456 450

<http://parentaidwaitakere.co.nz/>

<https://www.parentaidnorthwest.org.nz/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/in-crisis/>

<https://www.plunket.org.nz/plunket/what-we-offer/plunket-in-your-community/parent-groups/>

Free call or text **1737** anytime for support from a trained counsellor

**Lifeline**, 0800 543 354 or (09) 522 2999 or Free Text **4357** (HELP)

**0800 ANXIETY** (0800 2694 389) National Anxiety Support Line provides free support 24 hours-a-day.

Waitākere Mental Health **Crisis team**, (09) 822 8501

North Shore Mental Health **Crisis team**, (09) 487 1414, after hours (09) 486 8900 ask for North crisis team



