



STRATEGIES FOR FEELING BETTER

The following strategies improve levels of wellbeing for women experiencing antenatal or postnatal depression

Being listened to - having the opportunity to talk about how you feel

Talking about how you feel and what might be on your mind, will help you to manage some of the symptoms of postnatal depression. It is important that you talk to someone who can be really present with you and listen to you rather than offering advice.

A professional counsellor, your maternal and child health nurse, doctor, a friend or family member may provide this support.

Taking time out - having a break is vital to your sense of wellbeing

Taking a regular break to do something you enjoy just for yourself is important. Mothering a baby or toddler is a highly demanding job, sometimes undervalued in our society. Mothers deserve regular breaks, just like any other worker (especially as mothers are on call 24 hours a day!).

Take up offers or ask your partner, family or friend to look after your child on a regular basis. Some mothers utilise childcare such as community houses, family day care, childcare centres and occasional care. Ask your maternal and child health nurse or call your local council.

"I used to feel that caring for Tom was my job and felt guilty asking for help. Now I realise how much they enjoy being with him. Life is so much easier when I'm not exhausted."

Social contact with other mothers - spending time with other mothers, who you feel you can relax with, is beneficial

Ringing a friend, getting together when you feel the need to get out of the house, or talking when it's "all feeling a bit much", can make a huge difference to how you feel. Joining a support group, playgroup or parent's group may help.

Exercise and diet - your wellbeing is directly related to your physical health

Regular exercise increases the serotonin levels in the brain, which cause you to feel good. A daily walk allows you to get out of the house, in the fresh air, experiencing a change. Arranging to walk regularly with other mothers can make exercise enjoyable. Eating well can be very difficult for busy mothers. Have simple things on hand like fresh salad vegetables cut up ready to eat with dips, fruit and yogurt, wholegrain breads and hearty soups. These types of foods release energy more slowly and can be quite sustaining.

Although you may not feel like it and making changes in these areas may not come easily at this time, the effort involved will bring rewards in how you feel.

Try to involve others to assist so you can take care of yourself.

