

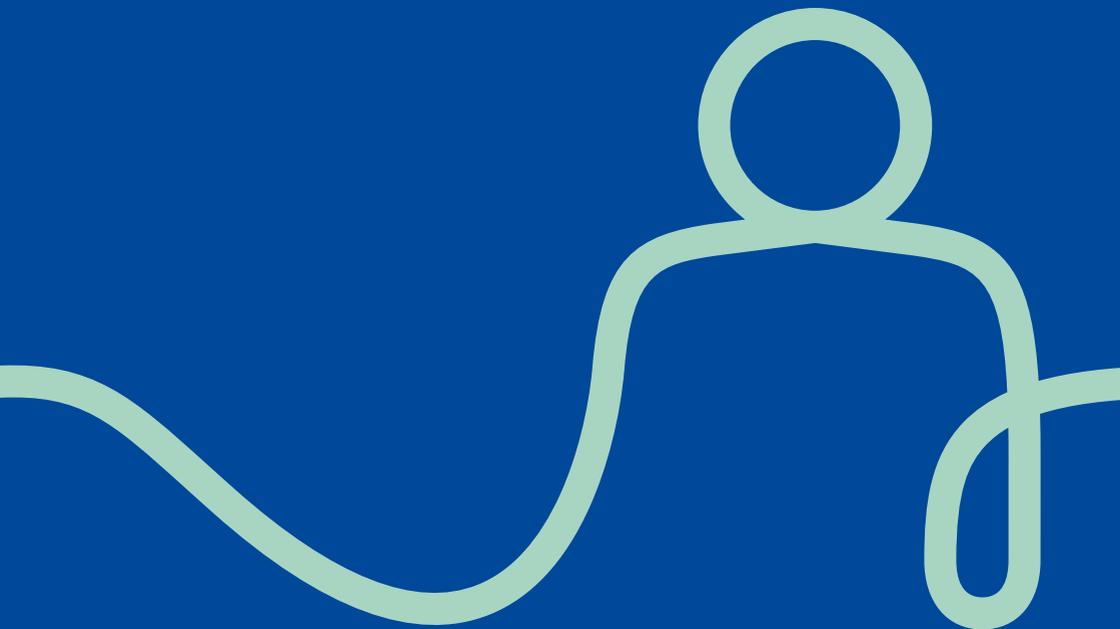
buzz

Manchester
Health & Wellbeing
Service



Pregnancy and Wellbeing

A guide to managing your
wellbeing during pregnancy



www.buzzmanchester.co.uk

This guide is one of a series about mental health and wellbeing by buzz Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service. You can find more guides at www.mhim.org.uk

‘Pregnancy and Wellbeing’ is about how to manage your emotional wellbeing during pregnancy and where you can find help.

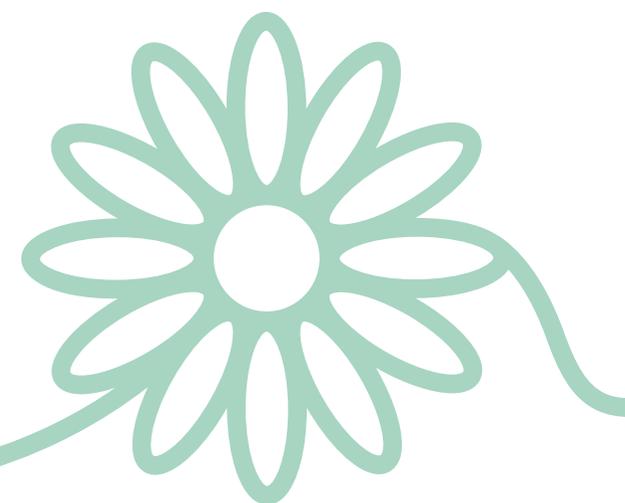
Understanding your emotional wellbeing during pregnancy

Pregnancy and childbirth are big life-changing events. They can bring about many emotional changes for women, their partners and the rest of their family.

Most women go through pregnancy and the first year after giving birth without experiencing any psychological problems. However some women can go on to develop problems such as anxiety and depression during and after pregnancy. These conditions are very common.

You have probably heard of the term ‘Baby blues’. It affects many new mothers and usually occurs in the first week after the birth. You may feel a shift in your mood and are likely to feel low and tearful because of the normal hormonal changes that take place in your body.

It can be hard to juggle the emotional, social, financial and physical demands of a baby and family life. Please don’t suffer alone. Your midwife, health visitor or GP will be able to support and advise you. Remember that most women make a full recovery.



Signs and symptoms

How will I know what to look for?

Here are some of the things to look out for if you are worried about your emotional wellbeing.

Tick any of the boxes that you have experienced:

- Feeling worried
- Being weepy or tearful
- Feeling anxious or irritable
- Having negative thoughts, for example: 'I can't cope with having a baby', 'Having a baby is not as great as I expected', 'People are critical of me as a mother'
- Sleeping problems
- Lack of concentration
- Lack of interest in things
- Loss of energy
- Loss of enjoyment
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling isolated

If you have ticked any of the boxes above or if you have thoughts of harming yourself or your baby, it is important to seek medical help straight away. Speak to your GP, midwife or health visitor. If you are very concerned about yourself, go to your local A&E department.



During your pregnancy, you will be routinely asked two questions about your emotional wellbeing. It is your chance to talk about how you are feeling. It will help you to get the right support.

During the last month, have you been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless?

During the last month, have you been bothered by having little interest or pleasure in doing things?

If you answer yes to either of these questions you will then be asked:
Is this something you feel you need or want help with?

During the early postnatal period, your health visitor will ask you these questions again.

What kind of help is out there?

If you are struggling with your mental health or emotional wellbeing during pregnancy, the type of help you need will depend on the nature of your problem.

For example, if your low mood is because you feel isolated at home with a new baby, you may be put in touch with local groups supporting new mums and their babies. Many of these run from the local Children's Centres.

You or your health professional may feel that you need more support. If so, there are other types of help available. These include counselling, medication and support from mental health services.

If you already have a known mental health disorder you should talk to someone as early in your pregnancy as possible. Tell your GP, midwife or mental health worker as soon as you know you are pregnant. You can then discuss and plan the best care for you and your baby. You can find a list of organisations and resources that can help at the back of this guide.

Remember...

Mental health problems can affect anyone at anytime. Please talk to someone if you are finding things hard to cope with. Help is available.

“I was so focused on the baby, I forgot to look after me. A happy mummy = a happier baby.”



Five ways to wellbeing

Just as we aim to eat five pieces of fruit and vegetables each day to improve our physical health, there are also five things that we can do to improve our mental wellbeing.

For more information read the guide 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk

The five ways to mental wellbeing are:

Be active

Try to keep active, for example, aqua natal classes. Get out and about more. Go for walks with your baby.

Connect

Talk to your partner and family. Keep in touch with friends. Talk to your midwife, health visitor or GP. Join a parents' group.

Give

Do good to feel good. Remember, you do this when you are looking after your baby. You could help a friend or smile at a stranger.

Keep learning

Try new experiences, for example, baby massage. Surf the internet.

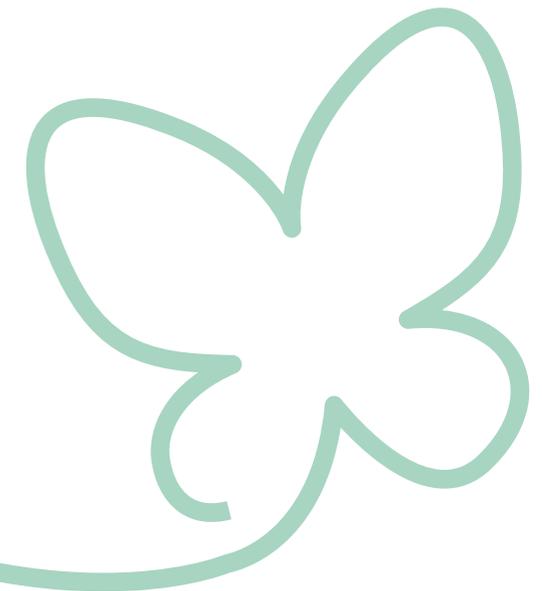
Take notice

Take time to look around. Enjoy the good things in your life. Practise being mindful.

Top tips

Is there anything I can do, to improve my mood?

- Be open about how you are feeling
- Talk to your partner, family and friends about how you are really feeling
- Share your experiences with other pregnant or new mums
- Eat a healthy diet
- Get out in the daylight
- Rest as much as you can
- Exercise as regularly as you can
- Treat yourself and make time for yourself
- Don't put too much pressure on yourself to look, act or feel a certain way
- Try to avoid long periods alone if you can. It can help to be around others when your mood is low
- Check out the websites listed at the back of this leaflet



Produced by buzz Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service
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