

Looking after your mental health

Becoming a parent for the first time, or welcoming another child to your family, comes with many emotions and feelings, ranging from excitement and happiness to stress and nerves. However, it is important to remember that you are not alone, and support is available no matter what you feel.

Signs that you should seek support

Seeking support early can help manage your feelings and make your pregnancy more enjoyable. During pregnancy, you may experience one or more of the following feelings:

- Difficulty focusing, concentrating, or remembering (feeling foggy)
- Having little to no interest in things you used to enjoy
- Panic attacks (heart palpitations racing heart, shortness of breath, shaking or feeling detached)
- Sleeping too much or not sleeping well
- Persistent, generalised worry, often about the baby
- Feeling constantly low or sad, or crying for no reason
- Withdrawing from friends or family
- Development of obsessive-compulsive behaviours
- Feeling constantly tired or lacking in energy
- Being easily irritated or annoyed
- Engaging in risky behaviour (i.e., alcohol or drug use)
- Abrupt mood swings
- Feeling nervous or panicked
- Losing interest in intimacy
- Having thoughts of self-harm, death, or suicide

Many of the signs that you should seek support following your child's birth are similar to those listed above. There are a few additional signs that may indicate you could do with seeking support. These signs are:

- Having thoughts of harming your baby
- Feeling angry

Actions to support your mental health during pregnancy

- Meditation to practice awareness, acceptance, compassion, and mindfulness
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Attend antenatal/parent education classes
- Seek support early

Actions to support your mental health after pregnancy

- Meditation to practice awareness, acceptance, compassion, and mindfulness
- Peer support (mother's groups, online parenting forums, friends, and family)
- Speaking to your GP or Child Health Nurse about your feelings and concerns
- Your partner's mental health

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For more information

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Your partner's mental health

Depression and anxiety during and after pregnancy are also common in the non-birth parent. It is essential to recognise the signs and encourage your partner to seek support.

Symptoms of anxiety and depression in the non-birth partner include:

- Fear of looking after the baby
- Changes in appetite
- Feeling isolated
- Ongoing moodiness, anger, or irritability
- Loss of interest in things that were once enjoyed
- Emotionally withdrawing from friends, family, partner, and the baby

Further resources

Ngala

- Phone: Metro (08) 9368 9368 or 1800 111 546 in regional areas
- Visit ngala.com.au

Pregnancy birth & baby

- Phone: 1800 882 436 (24/7)
- Visit: pregnancybirthbaby.org.au

The fathering project

- Visit: thefatheringproject.org

Playgroup WA

- Phone: 1800 171 882
- Visit playgroupwa.com.au

Meerilinga

- Phone: (08) 9489 4022
- Visit meerilinga.org.au

Act Belong Commit

- Visit actbelongcommit.org.au

Life-threatening situation, call 000

Support services

Panda—Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia

Phone support from trained counsellors are available. PANDA can also provide you with information on local services and has a range of resources available on their website. To access resources, visit panda.org.au

- Phone **1300 726 306** 9 am–7:30 pm Monday to Friday AEST or EDT

Beyond Blue

Immediate support is available via several platforms.

- Phone **1300 22 46 36**, available 24/7
- Online chat 1pm–12am (AEST) seven days a week via beyondblue.org.au

Mensline Australia

Phone, web and video counselling services are available. The phone service and online webchat operate 24/7. The video chat service is by appointment.

- Phone **1300 78 99 78**
- Visit mensline.org.au

Lifeline WA

Provides 24-hour **crisis support** and suicide prevention services for all Australians experiencing emotional distress.

- Phone **13 11 14**, available 24/7
- Online chat is available from 7pm to midnight (AEST) via lifeline.org.au
- Text support is available from 12pm to midnight (AEST) **0477 13 11 14**

Suicide Call Back Service

Offers free professional phone and online counselling for people living in Australia. Suicide call back services can provide:

- crisis support over the phone by calling **1300 659 467**
- Online chat counselling via their website suicidecallbackservice.org.au