

Feelings & Expectations About Becoming a Parent

Taking Care of Yourself

While becoming a parent can be an amazing experience in so many ways, it is also exceptionally demanding, both physically and emotionally. If at times you are finding the going tough, perhaps you may like to consider the following tips:

- Ensure you take time to eat and drink through the day. It is amazing how all consuming baby care can be and if you're not careful it may be midday before you realize you haven't had breakfast. Always have a drink handy when you feed your baby and make your meal times a priority—a healthy meal can be as simple as you care to make it.
- Don't rush around performing any number of household chores when your baby is asleep. Devote some of this time to resting yourself, even if you simply lie back in a comfy chair and close your eyes for a power nap.
- Try to get outside for a little fresh air and exercise every day. This is especially important if your baby has been unsettled. Take your stroller or position your baby safely in his sling and have a change of scenery.
- Assign yourself a little 'me' time each day. Even if it is just enough time to shower and blow dry your hair. It could make all the difference to how you feel.
- If you are having difficulty with some aspects of baby care, aim to take control of the issue by implementing strategies which are appropriate to your baby's age. Your Child Health Nurse may be a great support here, or you may decide to enlist the help of an organisation such as Ngala.
- Consider taking up offers of help. It is a great idea to enjoy a break from caring for your baby from time to time and close family and friends will relish the opportunity to get to know your baby better.

Post Natal Depression (PND)

In Australia Post Natal Depression affects a significant number of women following childbirth. For many it is short-lived and recovery is reached with support, rest and understanding. For many others, the symptoms persist and greatly affect the woman's relationship with her partner and her baby.

The onset of Post Natal Depression may be very gradual and many women suffer its symptoms without realising that there is support and treatment available.

Symptoms of PND

- Feelings of sadness, anger, exhaustion, emptiness, anxiety, panic and inadequacy.
- Difficulty sleeping, appetite changes, decrease in energy levels, lack of interest or pleasure in usual activities.
- Difficulty concentrating, thinking clearly or making decisions.
- Thoughts of running away or hurting your baby

Of course not everyone with Post Natal Depression will experience all of these symptoms. However, if you can relate well to any of the above and have been experiencing these symptoms for more than a few days, the best advice is to go and speak to your Doctor.

There are a number of treatment options for Post Natal Depression, but the first step is recognizing its signs and symptoms and seeking assistance.



Self Care Strategies

It is vital that you make some time for yourself, at least for short regular periods. If you have a partner, negotiate that you take turns having a break or 'time out' from your busy schedule. If you are a sole parent, refer to the section '**Asking for Help**'.

Some alternative ideas for self care strategies:

- Taking a relaxing bath.
- Meeting / visting a friend or relative for a chat.
- Reading a book or a few pages of a magazine.
- Preparing regular nutritious simple meals.
- Relaxation excercises, meditation or deep breathing exercises.
- Use soft lighting, music and aromatherapy (ensure scent is safe for use near your baby).

Asking for Help

It is important to acknowledge the need for help when a new baby enters your life. It can be difficult to manage the constant demands of a baby and our busy lifestyles in isolation. It is also vital that where a partner is involved the couple allows time for each other to talk and communicate their thoughts and experiences about being new parents.

Some alternative support may be available in the following list:

(The following services may not all be available in your area and are not listed in any particular order of preference)

- Other new parents, friends, or family
- Child Health Nurse or Midwife
- Australian Breastfeeding Association: 1800 686 2686
- General Practitioner or Paediatrician
- Telephone Helplines
- Ngala: 9368 9368
- Health Direct: 1800 022 222
- Hey Dad W.A: 9368 9368

- Beyond Blue: 1300 306 828
- PND Raphael Centre WA: 1300 306 828
- Parenting WA Helpline: 1800 654 432
- Red Cross: 9225 1946
- Kidsafe WA: 9340 8509

