

Starting Well in North Cumbria

“Making Every Conversation Count”

Mental Wellbeing and Pregnancy



<p>Before pregnancy</p>	<p>The best advice we can give you is to see your health professional to discuss pregnancy if you are concerned about your mental wellbeing.</p> <p>If you have a mental health condition and are planning to have a baby, discuss your plans with your GP or psychiatrist. Your doctor can discuss with you your medicine, how pregnancy might affect your mental health, how your mental health might affect your pregnancy and the care you can expect</p> <p>If you do not have a mental health condition, there is a small chance you may experience symptoms during pregnancy, but not all women do. Every pregnancy is different.</p>
<p>During pregnancy</p>	<p>The best advice we can give you is to keep checking in with yourself and speak to your midwife if you have any concerns about your mental wellbeing.</p> <p>It's natural to feel a bit stressed or anxious when you are pregnant. However, if you are struggling with these feelings you may need help. During pregnancy you can contact your midwife at any time if you are worried about your mental wellbeing. They will also ask you at each appointment how you are feeling.</p> <p>Talk to family and friends about how you are feeling. Ask for help if pregnancy symptoms are making life challenging.</p> <p>Self-care activities such as exercise, a healthy diet, avoiding drugs and alcohol and practicing relaxation techniques can be helpful.</p> <p>Think about ways you can bond with your baby during pregnancy – for example, talk and sing to your bump and play your baby music. Respond to their movements.</p>
<p>After pregnancy</p>	<p>The best advice we can give you is to seek help if you are worried about your mental wellbeing.</p> <p>Many women feel down, tearful or anxious in the first few days after giving birth. This is often called the "baby blues" and is so common it's considered normal – it doesn't last for more than two weeks after the birth. If your symptoms last longer or start later, it would be advisable to see your GP, Midwife or Health Visitor. Signs of mental ill health can start any time in the first year after giving birth. It affects around 1 in 10 new mothers. The earlier it's diagnosed and treated, the quicker you'll recover.</p> <p>Looking after a new baby is not easy. It is normal to find it difficult at times. Do not be afraid to ask for help from those around you.</p> <p>Bonding with your new baby will support your mental wellbeing. Ways to do this include regular skin-to-skin contact, breastfeeding, eye contact and lots of kisses and cuddles.</p>

“Our vision is for all families in North Cumbria to be valued, happy and healthy. We all want the very best for our families”

Further Information on: Mental Wellbeing & Pregnancy

<p><i>Will my existing mental health condition affect my pregnancy?</i></p>	<p>Possibly. It is important to get preconception counselling with your GP, Mental Health Team or midwife. They will be able to offer advice on things like medication, what symptoms to look out for and how to manage worsening symptoms. You may be assigned a Mental Health Specialist midwife or mental health practitioner who can support you throughout your pregnancy.</p>
<p><i>How do I know if I'm experiencing poor mental health during my pregnancy?</i></p>	<p>If you are feeling down or anxious, and it is affecting your everyday life (but you don't have a specific mental illness), you should be offered support to help you manage your feelings. This support could be from health professionals, voluntary organisations or other services. You may be offered psychological treatment (usually cognitive behavioural therapy or psychotherapy) if you have anxiety or depression. Pregnancy and birth can trigger depression in some women. Symptoms that may indicate you are depressed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling sad and hopeless • negative thoughts about yourself • not sleeping well, even when the baby is, or sleeping too much • a lack of interest or pleasure in doing things or being with people • loss of appetite <p>If you're worried, talk to your midwife or GP and they can discuss your treatment options with you. Find out more about symptoms of depression.</p>
<p><i>If it's more than feeling down what will happen?</i></p>	<p>If you have, or have had, a severe mental illness, your midwife or doctor should develop a care plan with you. You may be referred to the perinatal mental health team (which specifically offers support to pregnant women and new mums), or your local community mental health team.</p> <p>There may be several health professionals involved in your care, including doctors, midwives, specialist nurses, psychologists and health visitors. They should work together so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your care is co-ordinated • treatment is available when you need it • information is shared among professionals and with you (and your partner, family and carers if you agree) • your mental health is taken into account when planning your care <p>Treatment for mental health problems in pregnancy and after giving birth can include psychological treatments (such as talking therapies) and medication.</p>
<p><i>What can me and my partner do to keep mentally well?</i></p>	<p>The Tommy's website includes some great tips for how you can improve mental wellbeing during and after pregnancy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to others (family, friends, partners, other parents, your midwife) • Be physically active and get regular exercise • Try relaxation techniques • Do not be afraid to ask for help and have regular time to yourself • Find ways to bond with your baby (skin to skin contact, eye contact, breastfeeding, talking to your bump and baby)
<p><i>Links to further information and advice:</i></p>	<p>Before, during and after pregnancy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tommy's information on 'Planning a pregnancy and managing your mental health' • NHS guide to 'mental health problems and pregnancy' • Best Beginnings 'Out of the Blue' videos