

What does 'perinatal' mean?

This is the time from becoming pregnant and the postnatal period.

What is 'perinatal mental health'?

Your mental health is made of how you feel, how you think and how you act. When there are problems for you in your thoughts, feelings or behaviours during the time from when you become pregnant or in the postnatal period, this could be a perinatal mental health problem.

What are common mental health issues in the perinatal period?

Problems with your mood - It is quite common for women to feel low or anxious at this time (around 20% of women). Common symptoms are a loss of energy and motivation, feeling more negative about yourself and the world than usual, changes to your sleep and appetite (and not just because you have a baby to look after), feeling worried or agitated and feeling less confident in yourself.

Extreme fear of childbirth - Being worried about giving birth is normal but if that fear is causing you to feel very upset or feel like you no longer want your baby, then you might need some support with that.

Intrusive Thoughts - These are very common and can happen at any time of your life. These thoughts come into your head without warning and are upsetting. They are often about something bad happening to you or people you care about, including your baby. It is not unusual for women to experience distressing thoughts that they will cause harm to themselves or others. If you experience these thoughts, it does not mean that you pose a risk to others. It's incredibly hard for a woman to experience these thoughts and to talk about them. Talking about these thoughts will not make them worse; it can help you deal with them.



What are less common mental health issues?

On rare occasions women can experience severe problems with their thoughts, including thoughts of ending their life.

Women can become confused or develop unusual beliefs. This is called postnatal psychosis. Psychosis can be a scary experience for the woman and her family. It is a serious condition but is treatable and women do recover. Treatment should be sought as soon as possible.



How do I get help?

If you are worried about how you are feeling, talk to your Midwife, Health Visitor, GP or any other professional involved in your care. Mental health problems can happen to anyone. There is support for you and you can get better. If the person you talk to is not able to offer you the support you need, or if you feel that your concerns are not fully understood, you can contact mental health services directly.

What are the services that can help?

Your local area will have Primary Care Mental Health Services (who offer self-directed help as well as counselling and therapy) and Secondary Care Mental Health Services (who offer specialist Consultant Psychiatrists, Mental Health Nurses and other specialist professionals). One service is not better than the other, different people need different support. Either service can offer you an assessment and ensure that you are offered the most appropriate help.

What happens if I am referred?

The first stage is a brief telephone discussion (triage) which will help to direct your referral to the most appropriate service. You can expect that service to contact you to arrange an assessment.

What does 'assessment' mean?

This is a series of questions/a conversation to better understand you, your experiences and your life and how the team can best support you.



Myth busters

Myth If I talk to services my baby will be taken away

Truth The aim of all services is to support families to keep them together

Myth The moment I see my baby I will feel an overwhelming sense of love

Truth It can take time to get to know your baby and start to feel that bond

Myth I need to do everything for my baby

Truth If you have someone who can support you, it is important to give yourself a break and have time to rest

Myth I should be able to manage on my own

Truth Looking after a baby is not always easy; it is okay to ask for advice or support

Myth My baby should be able to feed easily

Truth Feeding is new to you and your baby; it can take time to learn this new skill. If you are struggling there are services that can support you in your feeding choices

Myth If I struggle with my emotions or my mental health I'm not a good mother

Truth Many women struggle at times with how they are feeling or coping. This does not mean you don't love your baby or that you can't give them what they need

Myth If my baby cries during a visit from a professional, they will think I can't look after my baby

Truth Babies cry, all the professionals coming to your home understand this

Myth I must have an immaculate home, be clean and tidy and my baby must be too, otherwise I will be seen as a bad mum

Truth Professionals understand how hard being a parent is. They are there to support you in being a parent and give advice on keeping you and your baby safe and well



The Every Mum Matters campaign was launched by the [Humber, Coast and Vale Health and Care Partnership](#) in April 2019 to encourage new and expectant mums in parts of Yorkshire and the Humber region to look after their mental health.

The campaign aims to support new and expectant mums and their families to be able to recognise symptoms of perinatal mental health conditions early and encourage them to seek help promptly.

For more information visit everymumatters.com

#everymumatters

Perinatal Mental Health

Helping you understand your feelings in pregnancy and the postnatal period

