

TIPS FOR POSTPARTUM HEALTH: EMOTIONAL

Many new parents are surprised by the time and energy it takes to look after a new baby. It can be a stressful time, and it's important to remember that taking care of your emotional wellbeing is an important part of postpartum health. The following tips can help:

Take care of yourself. Set aside time *every day*, even if its only 15 minutes, to care for yourself. Do something you enjoy, such as taking a bath or reading. Even a short break can make a difference in your ability to cope.

Be realistic. There may be times when you will feel exhausted, frustrated, angry and irritable. This is normal, even though people don't talk about it. There are no perfect babies or mothers—don't compare yourself to anyone else. While parenting books offer guidelines, every mother and baby is unique. Caring for your new baby is a process of learning—take it one day at a time.

Develop a support system. It can be a challenge to get out of the house with a new baby, and you may find yourself feeling isolated and lonely. There are many mothers' groups available to help. Check with your local community centre or YM/YWCA to find one near you. Don't be afraid to ask for help, whether you just need to talk or you need help with baby care or housekeeping. Accept help when it's offered.

Think positive. Acknowledge your accomplishments—even minor ones such as bathing the baby! Keeping a positive outlook can help you bounce back from disappointments and challenges. Negative thinking tends to wear us down emotionally and can lead to depression and anxiety. Try keeping a journal to celebrate your accomplishments.

If you experience postpartum depression

You may experience many different emotions after giving birth. But if you experience any of the following signs, talk to your healthcare provider. You may have postpartum depression or anxiety.

- Uncontrollable crying
- Feeling like you are failing at motherhood
- Feeling exhausted, even after resting
- Extreme changes in appetite
- Not able to enjoy yourself
- Feelings of panic and anxiety
- Scary thoughts of harm coming to your baby
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

Taking care of your emotional wellbeing is one of the most important things you can do for yourself. You don't need to do it alone. If you have any concerns about how you are feeling after having your baby, talk to your Public Health Nurse, Doctor or Midwife.

