

# Prenatal Education

## Key Messages for Ontario



## Mental Health

### Key Messages

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**How you feel mentally affects your whole body. Take care of your mental health before, during, and after pregnancy.**

You can take care of your mental health by:

- ▶ Taking time to relax.
- ▶ Getting enough sleep.
- ▶ Building a support network.
- ▶ Accepting help.
- ▶ Eating a healthy diet.
- ▶ Exercising regularly.
- ▶ Seeing your health care provider regularly.
- ▶ Seeking help and treatment if you feel emotionally or physically unwell.

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**Some people experience anxiety and/or depression during pregnancy.**

During pregnancy, a variety of physical, hormonal, and emotional changes occur. These changes can lead to stress for you and/or your partner. If you and/or your partner experience anxiety and/or depression, seek extra help and support as soon as possible. Mental health problems are common and are not a sign of weakness. A family history of anxiety, depression, or other mental illness, or stress during your pregnancy (such as a loss of a loved one) can increase your risk of developing anxiety or depression.

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**Baby blues are common in the first two weeks after giving birth.**

Baby blues can include feeling sad, tired, irritable, and/or overwhelmed. These feelings are normal in the first week or two after giving birth. They are typically caused by hormonal changes, fatigue, and a lack of sleep. Close friends and family members can help you get through this period. These feelings should not last longer than two weeks. If you have a very dark mood, are unable to sleep between your baby's feeds, feel confused, or have suicidal thoughts, seek professional help immediately.

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## Ask for help if you have symptoms of anxiety and/or depression.

Feeling anxious or depressed during pregnancy and after birth can occur, and it is important to note this is not your fault. If they are not treated, anxiety and depression can have a negative impact on your pregnancy, your health, and the health of your baby.

There are signs when it is important to reach out for help. Fathers or partners may experience symptoms too. You may:

- ▶ Not feel yourself.
- ▶ Be sad and tearful.
- ▶ Feel exhausted but unable to sleep.
- ▶ Have changes in eating or sleeping patterns.
- ▶ Feel overwhelmed and unable to concentrate.
- ▶ Have no interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy.
- ▶ Feel hopeless or frustrated.
- ▶ Feel restless, irritable, or angry.
- ▶ Feel extremely high and full of energy.
- ▶ Feel anxious.
- ▶ Feel guilty and ashamed – thinking you are not a good mother/father.
- ▶ Not be bonding with your baby or be afraid to be alone with your baby.
- ▶ Have repeated scary thoughts about your baby.
- ▶ Have thoughts about harming yourself or your baby.

There is help for you and your family. Talk to your health care provider about services for women and their families dealing with mental health issues. Effective and safe treatments can include therapy and medication. Most medications suggested are safe for your baby when you are breastfeeding. Getting prompt treatment will help you to feel better and improve the health of your baby.

If you have questions call the Mental Health Helpline at 1-866-531-2600. It is free and is available 24 hours a day.

If you have thoughts of harming yourself or your baby, get help right away. Call the Mental Health Helpline or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

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## Learn more about mental health during pregnancy and after birth.

You can learn more about mental health from the following resources.

- ▶ Your health care provider
- ▶ Your local public health unit 1-866-532-3161
- ▶ Canadian Mental Health Association [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)
- ▶ oMama [www.omama.com](http://www.omama.com)