



*Thames Valley*

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**Family Health Team**

# Mental Health and Well-Being

# Content

- Emotional changes
- Emotional fitness
- Baby blues
- Post-partum mental health disorders



# Health Equity Statement

- We acknowledge that this health promotion information does not address all unique cultural beliefs and practices surrounding pregnancy and birth, and we encourage you to have a conversation with your care provider when your cultural beliefs differ from any teaching within this presentation.



# Pregnancy & Stress



# Triggers/Coping Strategies

- Recognizing triggers
- Developing and using coping skills



# Pregnancy Stress

- Physical discomforts
- Hormonal changes
- Health of mother and baby
- Coping with labour and delivery
- Becoming a parent
- Changing relationships
- Financial concerns



# More Than Mood Swings

- Most of the time in the last two weeks...
  - Have you been sad, depressed or irritable?
  - Have you been unable to enjoy the things you used to?
  - Have you felt anxious, worried or panicky?
  - Have you cried more easily?
- Have you experienced any recent losses or stressful events?
- Do you have a history of depression, anxiety or other mental health challenges?



# Strategies for Coping

- Explore the source of stress
- Encourage yourself to eat healthy, be physically active regularly, get enough sleep
- Create a reliable support network of friends, family, and community resources





# Self-Soothing Techniques

- Engage your senses
- Spend time in nature
- Get creative
- Encourage positive self-talk
- Practice mindfulness, guided visualization  
self-massage (temples, forehead, hands)
- Simple chair exercises or gentle movement



# Coping Skills

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Mindfulness
- Self-compassion



# Principles of Mindfulness

- **Being present.**
- **Being non-judgmental.**
  - For example, simply acknowledge and accept your feelings without trying to get rid of them. Emotions are messengers.
- **Self-compassion.**
  - Be your own best friend. Congratulate yourself every time you are aware of your thoughts and be gentle with yourself in setting "doable" goals for change.



# Belly Breathing Exercise

- Make mindfulness a bonding moment. Place both hands on your belly and take a few deep breaths in and out. As you breathe, notice your baby belly rise and fall.
- Start out with just a few breaths once a day, then work your way up in slow intervals (e.g. 3 minutes, 3 times a day).



# "Baby Blues"

Feelings of:

- Sadness
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Being overwhelmed



# Postpartum Mood Disorders (PPMD)

- When the 'baby blues' last more than 2 weeks
- Happens to 1 in 5 people
- Can occur anytime within the first year after birth
- Affects the whole family



# Postpartum Mood Disorders (PPMD)



# Postpartum Mood Disorders (PPMD)

You are more at risk if you:

- Have been depressed or anxious during your pregnancy
- Have a history of depression and/or other mood disorders
- Have family members with mood disorders
- Had a recent stressful life event such as a move or a loss in the family
- Have little social support
- Have relationship difficulties with close family members





# Postpartum Psychosis

- Very rare, serious illness requiring immediate medical attention
- Symptoms include:
  - Having thoughts of harming yourself or the baby
  - Hearing or seeing things that are not there
  - Believing people or things are going to harm you or your baby
  - Feeling confused or out of touch with reality



# Coping with PPMD

<b>What an individual can do</b>	<b>What a partner, family, and friends can do</b>
Ask for help	Listen and support their feelings
Take care of yourself—sleep, nutrition, exercise	Develop your relationship with the baby
Take time for yourself	Ask how you can help
Get counselling or join a support group	Educate yourself about PPMD
Consider medication	Take care of yourself



# Postpartum Depression in Partners

- Can occur in 10.4% of partners
- Incidence increases to 25-50% if the mother also has PPMD
- Usually occurs later in the postpartum period



# Note to Partners

- Spend time holding, talking to and playing with the baby
- Spend time holding your baby skin-to-skin
- Participate in the care of baby
- Plan time alone with baby
- Be aware of the community resources and activities
- Take care of yourself



# Loving Kindness Exercise

- Developing a practice of compassionate understanding and kindness towards ourselves and our experience can thus be a radical and crucial first step towards loving acceptance of things ‘as they are.’  
And ourselves ‘as we are.’



# Community Supports

- LHSC Perinatal Mental Health Clinic
- BounceBack Ontario
- MLHU + SWPH Pregnancy Support
  - Often offer post-partum mood disorder groups in partnership with community organizations

