



Depression and anxiety are common mental problems that can affect anyone at any time but it is more likely for women to experience these during and after pregnancy – at least **1 in 5 women** are affected. When depression and anxiety are managed well, a mom is more likely to be able to care for herself and her baby.

Risk factors that make women more vulnerable to depression and anxiety are:

- Poverty and lack of food
- Lack of social support from a partner, family or community
- Depression in pregnant teenagers is twice as common.
- Moms living with HIV have particular strains on their mental health.
- When there are experiences of abuse or violence – either in the past or present
- Foreign nationals or people that have been displaced have often faced extreme difficulties back in their home country as well as in South Africa
- Alcohol and/or substance abuse can make mental health problems worse and the other way round too.
- An unwanted pregnancy
- A past history of mental health problems
- A difficult life event in the past year
- Bad experiences during childhood

Tips to prevent mental illness

- Develop and maintain strong, supportive relationships
- A companion to be present at the birth (this is your right)
- A time and place to talk to someone

If you are a mom struggling with depression or anxiety, remember

- You are not alone!
- You are not to blame!
- You will get better!



During the first 1000 days, caregivers need to be responsive, nurturing and to form strong attachments with their babies so that they develop intellectually, socially and emotionally.

- Dads have a powerful influence in promoting healthy babies and stable families.
- When the dad is present during pregnancy and at birth, it reduces mom's smoking, stress, high blood pressure, likelihood of birth complications, and of babies dying in the first year.
- Babies and young children with involved, loving dads are more likely to do well in school, avoid drug and criminal behaviour, avoid teenage pregnancy, and less likely to live in poverty or suffer from depression.
- The involvement of both parents can ensure a nurturing and secure home environment; encourage play, exploration and learning leading to positive developmental outcomes.
- A nurturing mom can help her baby overcome stress and adversity that he/ she may be exposed to.
- Many moms face stressors and need psychosocial support, information about parenting and social assistance which they can get at antenatal and clinic visits.
- The Parenting Centre: www.theparentcentre.org.za provides information, training and support to parents and can be contacted by telephone on 021 762 0116 or email marketing@theparentcentre.org.za.



FIRST 1000 days

Right Start. Bright Future.

Grow – Love – Play



The first 1000 days is the time from conception till the baby's second birthday.

- The First 1000 Days is a window of opportunity to make sure that your baby and child's growth and development is the best it can be.
- Whatever is done in this period will affect your baby throughout his/her life.
- Whatever is not done will affect your baby for the rest of his/her life.
- By the 1000th day (second birthday) your baby's brain would have reached 80% of his/her adult weight.
- Start caring for your baby before birth.
- Your unborn baby draws nutrients from you. Ensure that you have a balanced healthy diet and lifestyle.
- Protect your child's brain development from being harmed by violence in the home.
- Stimulate your child's brain development by playing, listening and talking to your child.
- Smile, praise and hug your child every day.

Start caring for your child before birth

270 Days

Day 365

Day 1000



Grow – Love – Play



Good nutrition is essential to ensure you are healthy during pregnancy and that your baby is born with a strong body and smart brain.

- Taking care of yourself and eating healthily during pregnancy helps the baby's brain and body to grow well.
- Visit an antenatal clinic or Midwife Obstetric Unit (MOU) before you are 3 months pregnant.
- Your baby needs only breastmilk for the first six months of life.
- Do 30 minutes of physical activity daily for improved wellbeing and mental health, coping with stress and for a healthier body.
- Ask for help in order not to drink alcohol, take drugs or smoke as these are dangerous for her growing unborn baby.
- Take zinc, iron and folate as recommended by your healthcare provider.
- Join Momconnect to receive tips during pregnancy.
- Ensure you receive an effective contraceptive method after delivery.
- Read your child's Road to Health Booklet for useful information including danger signs, feeding, how your child is growing and treatment of diarrhoea.
- After giving birth, attend your nearest clinic or MOU for postnatal checks for you and your baby.
- Learn about recognising the danger signs of illness.
- Have an emergency plan for medical care. For emergencies dial 10177.



Mental wellness and care is essential for a healthy mom, baby and family.

- Your unborn baby can hear your voice so read, sing and talk to your baby before he/she is born.
- Ask for your baby to be placed on your chest against your naked skin immediately after birth for at least an hour. It warms the baby, regulates heartbeat and breathing and stimulates brain development.
- A child needs a loving environment created by moms, dads, family and friends to provide the best start.
- Seek help if you are feeling sad or if you feel you cannot cope. Speak to somebody such as your healthcare worker, counsellor, religious leader or trusted family/friend.
- Gradually introduce your child to a caring and consistent caregiver before you return to work.



You, the pregnant mom, and the baby are influenced by a safe and nurturing environment

- Remember your baby can recognize your voices even before birth.
- Your baby needs to hear both mom and dad's voices, feel their touch, make eye contact and see them smile.
- Your baby picks up stress even before birth - domestic violence is harmful for your baby's developing brain
- Babies can calm down when mom and dad talk quietly and hold baby close for comfort.
- Feeling safe and loved is very important for your baby's emotional and brain development.
- The different ways dads and moms play and talk with their baby helps baby to learn more, without needing expensive toys.
- Mom is more able to respond in a caring way to her baby if she has a supportive partner.
- A safe environment helps your baby to explore and learn.

