

# Women's Emotional Health Service (WEHS)

Supporting your pregnancy and postnatal journey



## How can we support you?

Emotional health is as important as your physical health. The WEHS seeks to recognise and detect pre- and postnatal depression and other types of emotional distress to provide early intervention.

Emotional distress has been shown to have a negative effect on mother and baby, and can affect your physical health too. The earlier one seeks treatment, the better the outcome will be.

WEHS is a multidisciplinary team of healthcare professionals comprising psychiatrists, psychologists, case managers and occupational therapists. We aim to provide you and your loved ones with the support that you need during these critical moments.



Our services include:

- Emotional assessment & support for perinatal and gynae-oncology patients
- Case management
- Parenting support
- Fetal loss support
- Psychiatric / psychological consultation



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The information provided in this publication is meant purely for educational purposes and may not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. You should seek the advice of your doctor or a qualified healthcare provider before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical conditions.

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## Anxiety

While pregnancy can be a joyous occasion, the arrival of a baby also represents a major life event. As you enter into a new phase of life, it is only natural to experience uncomfortable emotions such as anxiety and fear. Not only are these experiences natural, they are also to be expected as hormonal changes during pregnancy may affect the chemicals in your brain.

So you may wonder, "Since it is normal to be worried, why should I bother?". While a certain level of worrying is to be expected, there is a difference between worrying and anxiety.

### Common symptoms include:

- Feeling anxious all or most of the time and not being able to control it
- Restlessness
- Excessive worrying (for example, about your health or baby's health)
- Feeling a sense of dread
- Being unable to concentrate, or feeling like your mind goes blank
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling constantly on edge
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep

### Normal worrying vs. Anxiety disorder

If you find yourself constantly worrying and feeling anxious, to an extent where it affects your mood, concentration and ability to function normally, it could be anxiety disorder.



## Baby Blues

The birth of a baby is an exciting and joyful experience, but it also presents new sets of challenges that many parents will find stressful and scary.

Up to two-thirds of new moms experience baby blues after childbirth, which commonly include mood swings, crying spells, anxiety and difficulty sleeping. Baby blues typically begin within the first two to three days after delivery and may last for up to two weeks.

### Common symptoms include:

- Feeling irritable or frustrated (e.g. over baby's prolonged crying, managing relatives' involvement in care)
- Anxiety about coping with needs of baby and feeling overwhelmed by childcare responsibilities
- Worries about baby's health, even when baby is fine
- Difficulty concentrating
- Appetite problems
- Trouble sleeping, even when time permits
- Crying spells, sometimes without any specific trigger

### What should I do if I experience these symptoms?

Since it lasts for such a short duration, there's usually no need to see a doctor. With the right amount of rest, support, encouragement and reassurance from family and friends, most mothers will start to feel better. However, if these symptoms persist longer than two weeks and/or intensify, it might indicate postnatal depression, for which you should seek medical assistance.



## Postnatal Depression

Postnatal depression (PND) or postpartum depression may be mistaken for baby blues at first, but the signs and symptoms are more intense, persists beyond two weeks and may eventually interfere with your ability to care for your baby and daily functioning.

PND often develops within the first few months after giving birth, particularly in the first five weeks. However, it can start at any time during the first year. In Singapore, about one in 10 women suffer from PND.

### Common symptoms include:

- Low/sad mood
- Tearfulness
- Irritability
- A sense of hopelessness
- A sense of guilt
- Extreme tiredness with no energy
- Poor sleep
- A loss of interest in activities/lack of motivation
- Lack of appetite
- Anxiety
- Negative feelings towards your baby
- Thoughts of harming self or baby, including suicidal thoughts\*

\* Please call SOS at 1800-221-4444 or IMH at 6389 2222 (24-hour hotlines), or go to the A&E if you need attention for suicidal thoughts.

