

# PRE/POSTPARTUM STRESS AND DEPRESSION

Pregnancy and new motherhood can bring a range of thoughts, emotions and experiences. While this journey often brings excitement and joy, it also brings challenges, anxiety, and stress.

Depression and anxiety are medical conditions and are treatable if you seek help. It is normal to be scared to talk to someone about the way you are feeling for fear of judgement. You are not alone. Speak to your provider about your treatment and support options.

In addition to medical support, prioritizing your mental health is an important practice which can help to support the wellbeing of both you and your child. It isn't "selfish" to be concerned with self-care and focusing on your own needs; practicing self-care may be more important now than ever.

**Need help? Contact the CT Chapter of Postpartum Support International: [www.psictchapter.com](http://www.psictchapter.com)**



## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

**1 IN 7 WOMEN/BIRTHING PEOPLE EXPERIENCE PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH COMPLICATIONS AND 1 IN 8 EXPERIENCE POSTPARTUM DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS.**

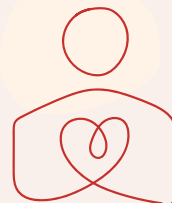
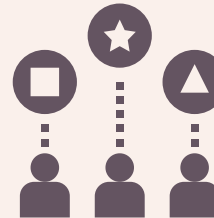
## SEEK SUPPORT

- SPEAK WITH YOUR PROVIDER AT YOUR PRENATAL AND POSTPARTUM CHECKUPS
- TALK WITH YOUR LOVED ONES
- JOIN A SUPPORT GROUP



## SYMPTOMS VARY

- LASTING SAD, ANXIOUS, OR "EMPTY" MOOD
- HOPELESSNESS, GUILT, OR WORTHLESSNESS
- FEELINGS OF IRRITABILITY OR RESTLESSNESS
- LOSS OF ENERGY
- FEELING DISTANT FROM YOUR BABY
- OVER OR UNDER EATING
- SUICIDAL OR SCARY THOUGHTS



## PRIORITIZE SELF CARE

- ASK FOR HELP WITH DAILY TASKS
- HAVE SOME ALONE TIME
- GET ADEQUATE SLEEP
- EXERCISE
- JOURNAL OR MEDITATE

# FEEDING YOUR BABY

Feeding is critical to your baby's health, but remember that you are also part of the feeding equation. You have the freedom and flexibility to create an individualized feeding plan to work for your family's unique needs. It's important to consider how the method you feed is supporting your overall health, including your mental health.

Feeding your baby is not a one size fits all. You may choose to exclusively breastfeed on demand, offer a combination of breastmilk and formula, provide expressed breastmilk, or use donor milk. No matter what you decide, planning for feeding during pregnancy increases chances of a successful outcome.

Feeding can be even more overwhelming if you have multiples. But, remember this is something you and your partner can do as a team - whether you have 1 baby or multiples. Make a feeding plan and let your partner know how they can support you! If you do not have a partner, let your family and friends know how they can help. Whether you have a partner or are parenting solo, joining a feeding support group can help connect you to parents who are having similar experiences!

**Need help? Contact your local CT WIC office:**  
<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/WIC/WIC>



## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

FEEDING YOUR BABY CAN BE CHALLENGING NO MATTER IF YOU CHOOSE TO BREASTFEED OR USE FORMULA. IN THE EARLY DAYS, YOU AND YOUR BABY ARE LEARNING, SO BE PATIENT AND SEEK HELP IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS.

## SEEK SUPPORT

CONNECT WITH:

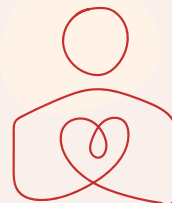
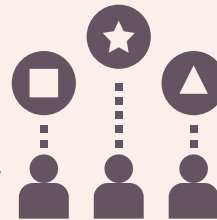
- CERTIFIED LACTATION CONSULTANT
- BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT GROUP
- REGISTERED DIETITIAN/NUTRITIONIST
- PERINATAL HEALTH CARE PROVIDER/PEDIATRICIAN
- THERAPIST



## CHALLENGES

CHALLENGES WITH FEEDING CAN ARISE FOR DIFFERENT REASONS AND VARY AMONG INDIVIDUALS:

- INEFFECTIVE OR PAINFUL LATCHING
- INFANT ALLERGIES TO FORMULA/BREASTMILK
- TRAUMATIC BIRTH EXPERIENCE
- LACK OF SUPPORT FROM FAMILY/FRIENDS
- INFANT WITH HEALTH PROBLEMS
- POST-BIRTH COMPLICATIONS
- LOW MATERNAL SELF-CONFIDENCE



## PRIORITIZE SELF CARE

- NOURISH YOUR BODY
- PRIORITIZE RESTING
- PRACTICE STRESS MANAGEMENT
- CONNECT WITH NON-JUDGMENTAL SUPPORTS

# SLEEPING AND REST

From getting up for multiple night feedings to checking the monitor as well as the stress of taking on a new role in life - there are interruptions that keep many parents from returning to a restful sleep schedule. But with practice and a little patience, it is possible to make sure you and everyone in the family can sleep through the night. Here are some steps to restful, restorative sleep:

- **Log off and cool down:** Create a cut-off time to unplug your smart devices that tell your body it's time to sleep.
- **Cut back on caffeine:** Cut back on caffeine around 8 hours before bedtime.
- **Cut back on naps:** Naps cut down the natural hunger for sleep. Once your child is sleeping well, skipping that afternoon nap can result in improved sleep.
- **Make your bed feel sleepy:** Make your bed an oasis for rest by only using it for sleep, unwinding, and intimacy.

For more tips and strategies, go to:

<https://www.seleni.org/advice-support/2018/3/15/getting-sleep-when-youre-a-new-parent>



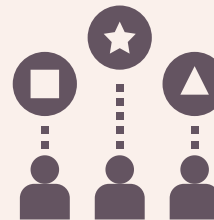
## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

MILLIONS OF NEW PARENTS STRUGGLE TO GET GOOD SLEEP, EVEN AFTER THEIR BABIES HAVE STARTED SLEEPING THROUGH THE NIGHT.



## SEEK SUPPORT

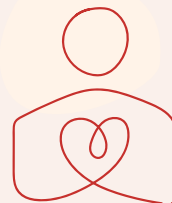
IF YOU FIND YOURSELF FEELING ANXIOUS OR WORRIED ABOUT BEING A NEW PARENT, CONNECT WITH A THERAPIST TO HELP REDUCE STRESS AND IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP.



## SYMPTOMS VARY

SLEEP DEPRIVATION CAN RESULT IN:

- INSOMNIA
- DAYTIME SLEEPINESS
- ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION
- NON-REFRESHING SLEEP
- FATIGUE
- SIGNS OF IRRITABILITY
- INCREASE SIGNS OF POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION



## PRIORITIZE SELF CARE

- SPEND TIME WITH YOUR SPOUSE/PARTNER
- PRACTICE MEDITATING BEFORE BED
- READ A BOOK
- TAKE AN EXTRA LONG SHOWER/BATH

# ALCOHOL & DRUG USE

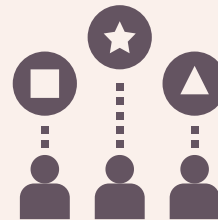
There is no known safe amount of alcohol use during pregnancy or while trying to get pregnant. There is also no safe time for alcohol use during pregnancy (CDC).

**If you are struggling to stop or reduce your alcohol and drug use while pregnant or parenting, you are not alone. CT DMHAS has resources for pregnant and parenting people.**

If you are breastfeeding or pumping, avoiding alcohol and drugs is the safest option. However, there are methods to ensure your supply is safe for your baby. Talk with your healthcare provider or local WIC office about your options.

If you are pregnant or parenting and struggling with substance use disorder and/or are in recovery, you can also work with your doctor in creating a plan of safe care. A plan of safe care is a document that lists supportive and individualized resources for you and your baby.

**If you need help with substance or alcohol use while pregnant or parenting contact Women's REACH Program through CT DMHAS:**  
<https://portal.ct.gov/DMHAS/Programs-and-Services/Women/Womens-REACH-Program>



## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

FOR SOME WOMEN/BIRTHING PEOPLE, DRINKING ALCOHOL OR USING SUBSTANCES DURING PREGNANCY IS NOT A RECREATIONAL CHOICE, BUT A CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITION BEYOND WILLPOWER ALONE. IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING TO STOP OR REDUCE YOUR USE YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

## SEEK SUPPORT

- PROUD PROGRAM
- WOMEN'S REACH PROGRAM
- CT COMMUNITY FOR ADDICTION RECOVERY
- CT BIRTH TO THREE

## SYMPTOMS OF SUD

- PROBLEMS CONTROLLING ALCOHOL/SUBSTANCE USE
- PROBLEMS CONTROLLING ALCOHOL/SUBSTANCE USE DESPITE DESIRE TO QUIT
- DEVELOPING CRAVINGS/TOLERANCE/WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS TO A SUBSTANCE

## PRIORITIZE TREATMENT

- MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT
- MEDICATION FOR OPIOID USE DISORDER
- THERAPY
- PEER RECOVERY SUPPORTS

# WELLNESS APPOINTMENTS

A postpartum checkup is a medical checkup you get after having a baby to make sure you're recovering well from labor and birth. Go to your postpartum checkups, even if you're feeling fine. They're an important part of your overall pregnancy care.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (also called ACOG) has released new guidelines calling for changes to improve postpartum care for women/birthing people. They recommend that all women/birthing people:

- Have contact with their health care provider within 3 weeks of giving birth
- Get ongoing medical care during the postpartum period, as needed
- Have a complete postpartum checkup no later than 12 weeks after giving birth

**For more information on postpartum checkups go to:**  
<https://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/your-postpartum-checkups.aspx>



## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

**A POSTPARTUM CARE PLAN IS A PLAN THAT YOU AND YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER MAKE TOGETHER.**

## SEEK SUPPORT

**YOUR POSTPARTUM CARE TEAM CAN CONSIST OF:**

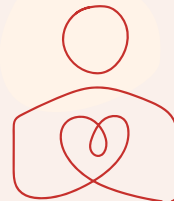
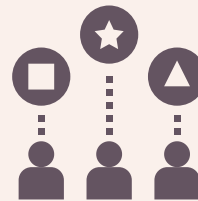
- PRENATAL CARE PROVIDER
- PEDIATRICIAN
- PEDIATRIC NURSE PRACTITIONER
- LACTATION CONSULTANT
- CASE MANAGER OR CARE COORDINATOR
- FAMILY AND FRIENDS



## SYMPTOMS VARY

**CONTACT A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IMMEDIATELY IF YOU EXPERIENCE POST-BIRTH SYMPTOMS:**

- CHEST PAIN
- TROUBLE BREATHING
- HEAVY VAGINAL BLEEDING
- SEVERE HEADACHE
- EXTREME PAIN IN LOWER BELLY
- FEELING SAD OR HOPELESS
- NAUSEA OR HIGH FEVER



## PRIORITIZE SELF CARE

- GET PLENTY OF SLEEP
- EAT HEALTHY FOODS
- PRACTICE YOGA OR MEDITATION
- ASK FOR HELP FROM PARTNER/SPOUSE/FAMILY