



MENTAL WELLNESS GUIDE
FOR PREGNANCY AND BEYOND

by *Lola&Lykke*



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Having a baby is one of the wildest things you will ever go through. From excitement to worry, your emotions and thoughts are changing alongside your body. And in less than nine months you are supposed to take care of a small human being! That's a lot to take in. Staying on top of your mental wellbeing becomes a priority like never before.

Pregnancy and parenthood are full of emotions for mum and partner – some good and some terrible. Just remember that there are lots of places to find help!



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Your Mental Wellbeing During Pregnancy



Each pregnancy is the beginning of a new stage of life, and it starts when you find out you are pregnant. You will probably experience a wide range of emotions regardless of how baby came to be: Baby may be long expected, or an unwelcome surprise. Many women describe joy and excitement but also worry and fear. Tears aren't uncommon either. Many things will affect how you feel during pregnancy, from physical symptoms (e.g. morning sickness) and support you have (or don't have), to events happening in your life. Many are concerned with similar things:

- Is this the right time for me/us to be pregnant?
- Will I be a good parent?
- How will this impact my/our lives?
- Will baby be healthy?
- How can I cope with childbirth?
- What if I/we are expecting multiples?

I thought when you're pregnant, everything must be fine, because no one ever tells you any different.

There is no right or wrong way to feel when you find out you're pregnant — your reactions and emotions will depend on you and your situation. If you're feeling confused or unhappy, talk to someone you trust about your feelings. You can also talk to your general practitioner (GP), obstetrician, or midwife about a referral to a counsellor or psychologist — sharing your concerns can be very helpful. And sharing your happiness too.

We haven't included stress in this guide, as it isn't really a mental health condition. Instead it is a condition you should probably expect as, even if your pregnancy goes smoothly without any hassle, the newborn era may a very different story: Baby requires around the clock feeding, cuddles, and care for the first wee while. And you may be a first-time mum which can make looking after a baby even scarier. That will pass though. And you might find that stress easier to manage with the tips we have included throughout this e-guide.

Looking after your emotional health during pregnancy

Emotional health is a state of wellbeing. When we feel well and content, we are better able to cope with stress, maintain relationships and enjoy life. Just as there are many benefits from being physically healthy, you and baby can benefit from being emotionally healthy.

If you have history with any mental health condition, discuss this with your health professional. This can improve the care you get and support options available during your pregnancy.

Some helpful ways to prepare for pregnancy and parenthood include:

- Speaking and sharing your thoughts with partner, friends, or family
- Developing a network with other women or parents who are also pregnant or who have children of a similar age (e.g. mothers' group)
- Attending antenatal classes such as [The Pregnancy, Birth & Beyond series](#)
- Being aware of your expectations about pregnancy, birth and becoming a parent
- Thinking about who might be able to support you if you need it.



While preparation is important, it's also good to remember that you can't prepare for everything and some things that happen to us are beyond our control. Sometimes there is no other person to help you on your journey, sometimes you are alone. But remember that while going through pregnancy and parenthood alone is twice as hard, it's also doable. And there are ways to get help. Sometimes mental health issues manage to take hold despite all the possible precautions being in place. And sometimes symptoms caused by your pregnancy can seem similar to symptoms of mental illness. For example, broken sleep and lack of energy are common in both pregnancy and depression. So try to keep an eye on things, but not too closely! Consider making Lola&Lykke and the Modern Midwife's [meditation](#) as part of your self-check routine.

It might be that your work hours or other commitments are very exhausting. Try to negotiate some flexibility, but if you hit a wall, be aware that many things can help you manage physically and emotionally. It might still get rough but don't suffer in silence! Join our [Instagram](#) community at @lolalykke_formums and discover more helpful information for YOUR pregnancy journey.



Matrescence

You have heard of adolescence – we've all gone through the rough transition from childhood into adulthood which involves emotions, hormonal changes, and your body acting in a new, unfamiliar way. Well, we'll let you in on a secret: the transition into motherhood is no different!

Alexandra Sachs, MD, a reproductive psychiatrist, author, and podcast host, has committed to teaching us about 'matrescence'. She claims that being pregnant is like going through puberty again:

"Your hormones go nuts, your hair and skin don't behave the way you'd like, and you develop a new relationship with a body that seems to have a mind of its own... The difference? Everyone understands that adolescence is an awkward phase. But during matrescence, people expect you to be happy while you're losing control over the way you look and feel."

Despite the individuality of each motherhood journey, Sachs identifies many universal aspects following women through matrescence:

- **Ambivalence:** Pregnancy, birth, and parenthood aren't good or bad, they are always both.
- **Fantasy vs Reality:** You have a vision of what it's supposed to look like. If reality looks wildly different than your vision, disappointment may increase your likelihood of developing mental health issues.
- **Guilt, shame, and 'good enough mother':** Too many mums think 'good enough' is not enough, and sounds like settling, or failure. This is not true!
- **Intergenerational:** Your maternal identity are affected by your mothers', her mothers' and so on.
- **Competition:** Your attention is divided. Family, friends, work, even your spouse compete for your attention with new baby.

All in all, you have a massive field to navigate through. It is no wonder that your body and brain may sometimes feel like they are failing you. However, remember, that in a way your motherhood journey is a chance for a do-over. You can build on the good things you remember from your childhood, and actively discontinue some parenting habits. Indeed, your pregnancy and motherhood journey may end up looking similar to your mothers'. But it doesn't have to.

Pregnancy loss

It doesn't matter at what stage of pregnancy it occurs or why, miscarriage or stillbirth are traumatic for everyone, including parents, family and friends. It's important that parents who have lost a baby keep in touch with health professionals or organisations that provide support at this time. Getting closure in a way of scattering their ashes or laying them to rest at a cemetery may help you carry on. You are in our thoughts whoever, and where ever you are.

Your Mental Wellbeing After Childbirth

Many women describe emotions relating to birth being happiness, achievement, relief and pride. However, it can be very disappointing and distressing if things don't go as planned. Labour can be accompanied by feelings of anxiety and exhaustion, too. Women and partners may find childbirth even more difficult if:

I always hoped for a natural birth, but things didn't turn out that way. The main thing was that everyone was healthy

- There are complications during pregnancy, or birth involves more medical intervention, pain, or time than expected.
- The baby arrives late or early, especially if they are premature and need to stay in neonatal intensive care.
- They don't feel supported or acknowledged.
- They have more than one baby.
- There are problems with their baby's health.

We invite you to pull away from thinking all is well that ends well despite terror and trauma that you may have experienced during labour. Finding out things like episiotomy have been done to you without your knowledge can be traumatic. Instead, we want to empower you to take charge of your pregnancy journey. Knowing what to expect and being aware of what is happening even during unexpected events will ease your mind and help protect you from fear of the unknown.



Emotional responses following childbirth

Having a baby is a very emotional time no matter if your baby comes vaginally or through C-section. After birth you may be happy and healthy, with great memories and minimal soreness. Or you may be sore, not getting enough sleep, overwhelmed by your new baby, and feeling worried about being a good mum. Being a mum is hard work! You might have had unrealistic expectations of new motherhood. And you might find it hard not having much time to yourself.

“

Generally not interested — especially not interested in my baby ... I never felt like I wanted to harm her ... I always felt a great deal of love, but I wasn't happy, the interactions were not positive. I didn't want to play ... didn't want to interact with her.

”

Up to 80% of mums experience what is generally called the 'baby blues': you can feel teary, irritable, hypersensitive, moody, or overwhelmed after giving birth. Often, the culprit are changing hormone levels and the feelings usually pass within a few days.

You need (and deserve!) support, love, and understanding. Baby blues is often used as an umbrella term for all mental (and some physical) wellbeing related issues post birth. But if these symptoms persist beyond the early days, it may be a sign of something more serious like depression or anxiety.

The experience of early parenthood

The transition into parenthood, enjoyable and satisfying for some, may feel like you are drowning to others. The first year of life with a new baby is a constant and demanding job that can involve sleepless nights, spells of crying and at times not knowing what to do. Birth and breastfeeding involve many physical changes and recovery can take time. Common challenges after birth include tiredness, loss of libido, loss of couple time, and little time to yourself.

Dealing with changes in your everyday routine, as well as learning to look after baby, requires lots of energy, emotional commitment, and patience. It's not surprising that parents find it hard to cope at times. If you are in a good emotional space for it, consider sharing your story with other mums on platforms like our [Instagram](#) community.



It's not just new mums or mums-to-be who can feel anxious and apprehensive. Welcoming a new member of the family can also be a complicated time for partners, who may worry about being a good partner and parent, how a baby will affect their lifestyle, or how they will deal with the added responsibilities.



Getting to know your baby

Some parents don't always feel close to their baby right away or know just what to do to settle their baby — it's common to take a while to feel comfortable and confident in your new role. Your baby is ready to interact with you from the first day and will communicate with you through their crying, gurgling and body language. To be in tune with baby's needs, it helps to know what these different communications look and sound like. This will help build a foundation for your early relationship. Every time you interact with your child, you are helping them develop new connections within the brain.

It will take time and patience to reach a point where you can feel comfortable with knowing what your baby needs. Every baby is different with their own temperament, their own way of interacting and with different sleep patterns. By observing your baby's behavioural cues and coming to recognise their hungry and tired signs you will be best able to respond to them. Remember that most new parents will have their own sleeping disrupted so getting as much rest when possible is important.

Keep in mind:

- There is no one 'right' way to give birth.
- Parents do not always instantly fall in love with their baby — it may take some time after the birth (especially after a very long or difficult birth).
- It is very common to feel emotional and/or overwhelmed in the week after the birth.

Depression and Anxiety

As many as 1 in 5 women struggle with their mental wellbeing during pregnancy or after childbirth.[1-3] It can happen to anyone. Depression and anxiety are the most common mental health issues in pregnancy, and they affect about 10 to 15 out of every 100 pregnant women.[4-5] Women are more vulnerable to mental health issues during pregnancy, but symptoms can and do vary greatly. Below, we have separated depression and anxiety symptoms into their own categories. However, it's good to keep in mind that you may experience significant overlapping of symptoms, and many women experience depression and anxiety at the same time.

Minorities are in a more vulnerable position to start with, and for example refugee women have experienced loss of loved ones, sexual assault as they fled wars, and years of uncertainty in refugee camps. If you have existing trauma, and it doesn't have to be a sexual assault or a death of a loved one, request information about your options. Your past experiences with mental health issues may increase the risk of becoming unwell, particularly after birth. However, with the right help this can often be prevented.

You can also develop mental health problems for the first time in pregnancy or after birth. How your mental wellbeing is affected depends on many things. These include:

- The type of mental illness you may have had already.
- Stopping medication for a mental health problem - you have a high risk of relapse if you do this when you become pregnant. This is more likely if you have had a severe illness, several episodes of illness or a recent episode.
- Recent stressful events in your life (such as a death in the family or a relationship ending).
- How you feel about your pregnancy - you may or may not be happy about being pregnant.
- Upsetting memories about difficulties in your own childhood.

Symptoms of mental illness in pregnancy are similar to symptoms you have at other times, but some may focus on the pregnancy. For instance, you may have anxious or negative thoughts about your pregnancy or your baby. You may find changes in your weight and shape difficult to deal with, particularly if you have had an eating disorder or struggle with body dysmorphia.

If your symptoms last more than two weeks, it's time to get help. The sooner you see someone, the quicker you'll start to feel better.



Depression Symptoms

Depression is a mental health condition that may develop gradually or within a short period of time, and may go on for many months, or even years if untreated. It may start before or during pregnancy and then continue after childbirth, or it may develop for the first time after baby has arrived.

I lost the capacity to process, to make decisions... every decision was too hard ... I just wanted to go to bed

In many instances, depression is not recognised and may get worse – which may interfere with your pregnancy or becoming a parent. It may also return in future pregnancies. Depression affects not only you, the mother, but also your relationship with your partner, your baby, and baby's development.



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If you have experienced some of the following symptoms for two weeks or more, it's time to seek support:

- Feeling sad, down or crying for no obvious external reason
- Having little or no interest in things that bring joy (like, exercise, eating or being with your partner or looking after yourself)
- Withdrawing from social contact*
- Appetite or weight changes (not eating or over-eating)
- Not being able to fall back to sleep after night feeds or excessive sleeping
- Feeling agitated or slowed down
- Decreased energy* and feeling exhausted* or unmotivated
- Feeling inadequate, like a failure, guilty, ashamed, worthless, hopeless, helpless, empty or sad; often feeling close to tears
- Having trouble thinking clearly or making decisions*, lack of concentration* and poor memory*
- Having thoughts about harming yourself or baby, ending your life, or wanting to escape or get away from everything
- Fear for baby and/or fear of being alone with baby
- Feeling angry, irritable or resentful (e.g. feeling easily irritated by your other children or your partner)
- Losing interest in sex or intimacy*

**These symptoms can also result from a lack of sleep which often happens with a new baby!*

“ The thought of getting through the day is daunting ... no-one tells people how hard it is ... usually easy tasks are beyond your ability. ”

” I felt nothing ... Just numb, emotionally dead/flat ”

” I think it was about inadequacy and a bit of jealousy ... watching other mums enjoy and cope ... I couldn't even have a shower ... I couldn't cope with the inadequacy I felt. ”



Anxiety Symptoms

Some degree of worry or anxiety is normal when you are pregnant or have just become a parent. The trouble is, too much anxiety and distress may affect your ability to enjoy your pregnancy and manage the challenges of caring for a newborn. Most of all, anxiety conditions draw from your power that is needed elsewhere.

Mums with anxiety often fear they are losing control or 'going crazy'. Many are driven to try to do everything without any help and often worry that what they are doing with their baby is not 'right' or 'enough'. This can lead to low self-confidence and a fear that they are not doing well as a parent or as a partner.



Anxiety conditions often present with a combination of these symptoms:

- Anxiety, fear, or worry, that interrupts your thoughts and interferes with daily tasks
- Panic attacks — a racing heart, palpitations, shortness of breath, shaking or feeling physically 'detached' from your surroundings
- Constantly feeling irritable, restless or 'on edge'
- Having tense muscles, a 'tight' chest and heart palpitations
- Finding it difficult to relax and/or taking a long time to fall asleep at night
- Fear of being alone with baby
- Anxiety or fear that leads you to check on baby constantly
- Persistent, generalised worry, often focused on health concerns
- Obsessive or compulsive behaviour

There are a number of different types of anxiety and anxiety-related conditions. From generalised anxiety to obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and post-traumatic stress (PTSD). Speak with your medical team if you suspect something more may be going on than just those passing anxious thoughts and feelings. Consider also looking up local groups dedicated to postnatal mental health issues.

I would sit with the baby all day and not do anything ... I was frightened to leave him, thinking that something would happen even in my own home

I can't stop feeling that something will go wrong with this pregnancy.

I'm just so worried about everything

I [was thinking] this is not the way you are supposed to feel when you have a baby ... you are supposed to look at it and feel completely in love and all the rest of it ... but I was completely panicked ... it was like this tidal wave of anxiety sort of crashed down on me

I just felt so sad and anxious about everything ... I'd lie awake at night waiting for her to cry ... the sleeplessness, the anxiety, not being able to watch the news because everything made me sad.

Less common mental health conditions

There are less common mental health conditions that can affect a woman during pregnancy or in the year following birth and can be serious. These conditions include bipolar disorder, postpartum (puerperal) psychosis and schizophrenia. Some mums can also be more vulnerable to eating disorders during the weight gain and physical changes pregnancy brings. We recommend talking about these with your medical team if you are worried or would like more information.

Getting help when you need it

A number of health professionals are ideally placed to identify when a mum may need support for a mental health condition (GP, midwife or maternal, child and family health nurse). Alternatively you, your partner or family may realise that something is not quite right (e.g. if you are finding it difficult to manage from day to day).

I knew I needed help; it was just a matter of finding the right combination of help for me.

There are effective treatments for most mental health disorders.

COUNSELLING

Counselling can be a great way to open up in a safe space in private or as a group. It might even be beneficial to include your partner in some sessions, or consider couples therapy:

Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) teaches people to change negative thoughts that often underlie depression and anxiety, and to challenge these thoughts to change the way they react to certain situations. Behavioural approaches introduce ways of increasing pleasant activities. Stress management and relaxation skills are also taught.

Interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) helps people find new ways to get along with others and to resolve losses, changes and conflict in relationships, to reduce the impact of depression and anxiety.

The group was fantastic. I still use its principles to this day. The greatest gift of the group was support from other women who knew exactly how I felt. There was no judgement, no ridicule or hurt. Just nurturing and support.

Lola&Lykke has an [Ask an Expert](#) service, where we connect you with physiotherapists, lactation consultants, doulas, nutritionists, therapists, and midwives for all those questions you may feel uncomfortable asking in person!





MEDICATION

Medication can really help get your mental wellbeing back in check. Antidepressants will likely take some weeks to have an effect, will require your commitment for a long time, and you may experience some side-effects. You may also need to try more than one type of medication to find one that is best for you. We highly recommend talking therapy like the options above during this time.

Share your worries and anxieties about the medication if you are concerned how and if they will affect your baby in-utero or through breastmilk.

PHYSICAL PARENTING SUPPORT

Physical parenting support can also be helpful to allow for some time for self-care and rest. This can look very different situation depending. For some, it can be babysitting so mum can rest or shower, have a date night, or just feel like an adult again instead of a 24/7 milk and cuddle machine. It might look like cleaning, cooking, grocery shopping, or even actual parenting classes.

SELF-HELP APPROACHES

Many women find comfort in activities like yoga, exercise, and meditation. Try Lola&Lykke and the Modern Midwife's meditation [here](#). If you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed, talking to a friend, family member, or faith leader can help you feel better.

EDUCATION

Education and awareness of your own condition; the more you know, the more you know what to look for. Attending classes such as our [Pregnancy, Birth & Beyond series](#) will empower you to take an active role in your pregnancy and motherhood journey



Although personal preference is important, the best recovery is likely when evidence-based treatments are used. Medication, when used alongside psychological treatment and support, can play an important role in helping people with severe depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions to manage from day to day.

Accepting support

Many women struggle with high expectations of motherhood. The very nature of mental health conditions, such as feeling isolated, disconnected or disorganised, can be a barrier to seeking support.

Support from family and friends can benefit many women dealing with perinatal mental health conditions. For some people, this extra practical or emotional support is enough to set them on the road to recovery, especially if their depression and/or anxiety symptoms are mild. Practical, at-home support from family, friends, and even your neighbours, such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of the baby (or any older children) can take some pressure off you while you adjust to life with your new baby. Some community services also offer in-home support services using volunteers or support workers. Take part in playgroups to socialise your baby and network with new parents in similar situations!

I wasn't ready to admit something was wrong ... I did a really good job of tricking myself into believing that I was fine ... until I wasn't able to cope at all

You feel like a failure. You have this beautiful new baby, and you are not able to provide for him as you expect from all the ads and all the ideals.



And allow your partner to be an active participant in your pregnancy and motherhood journey. Consider the following:

- Encourage your partner in their parenting role and invite your partner to attend appointments or groups with you.
- Babies adapt to different ways of doing things so it's OK if your partner does things differently.
- Share the household chores as much as possible between you and your partner.
- Greater involvement increases confidence and helps build a strong relationship with baby (while taking some pressure off you).
- Remember that you will both need 'time out', away from each other and baby.

“If you had broken a leg, you would seek help — no question. But if something is wrong with our thoughts, we often feel we should sort it out on our own. Seek help for your mind like you would for your body!”

“If I had the right help, it would have been easier ... you stop being able to make clear decisions ... your mind is not working properly, so you're making the wrong decisions”

Remember: It can take time to adjust to becoming a parent. There is no 'right' way to parent, and don't be harsh on yourself. Value your role as a parent — it's a very important job. Try not to compare yourself with others, rather seek support as early as possible.

Joining a community

Asking certain questions may feel foreign and uncomfortable, so we decided to create the Lola&Lykke community on [Instagram](#). We keep you updated with news, products, and real pregnancy and mamahood experiences from real mums. You are always welcome, and please do ask because chances are, many other mums are struggling with same questions you are – and many have found answers and coping mechanisms already. Let us help you to connect the dots!



EVERYBODY LEAVE ME ALONE

I've had a busy day being pregnant and need to do it again tomorrow



Looking after yourself

Good emotional health and communication helps you enjoy early parenthood, maintain positive relationships with any older children and other family members, and can help couples through the challenges of adjusting to a new baby together. Try to be realistic about what you expect of parenthood. Here are some helpful things to remember.

- There will be good days and bad days for every parent.
- Parenting is a skill you learn. You will get more confident with your baby over time.
- You will benefit from time out to have a break and do something you enjoy.
- You may find it hard to find time for household tasks. Be prepared to let some things go that you may have prioritised before.
- It's important to remember that some babies are easier to settle and comfort than others.
- Eat regular, healthy meals, exercise regularly and avoid drugs and alcohol.
- Sleep is important — take every available opportunity to rest.
- Some people find deep breathing, yoga and relaxation techniques helpful.
- When possible, try not to make major life changes like moving house or changing jobs.

There are many things you can do to support your recovery:

- Save the number of a local support line onto your phone early on in your pregnancy. This way it is already available if you find yourself needing it at any point.
- Learn about pregnancy-related mental health conditions and the treatments that are available.
- Seek contact with other parents, including those who have antenatal or postnatal mental health conditions — find out where to get help should you need it at some point.
- Develop a support system of friends, family and professionals and accept support.
- Nurture the relationship with your partner.

- Don't bottle up feelings — discuss them with your partner, friends and family.
- Organise childcare or ask friends or family to look after your baby or children occasionally.
- Take time to do things you enjoy like reading a book, listening to music or having a bath.
- Join a supported playgroup to nurture your relationship with baby.
- Socialise even though it can take a lot of effort; but it's also OK to restrict visitors when feeling unwell, overwhelmed or tired.

5 ways to wellbeing

Connect... with your people. Family and friends are the cornerstones of your wellbeing; nurture them. Connect with your medical team, people who can teach you, those whose experiences are valuable to you. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active... and go for a walk, breathe fresh air. Visit a forest, or a park. Try exercise antenatal exercise classes. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good physically and mentally during pregnancy. After childbirth, take baby with you or dedicate an exercise class as grownup time.

Take notice... of the surrounding world. Be curious. Savour the moments with baby, their smell, their soft skin, those little noises they make. And savour the moments with your partner. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you. Consider a meditation practice like [this one](#).

Keep learning... new things. Pregnancy and parenthood will look different with each baby, so keep an open mind. Sign up for that Pregnancy, Birth & Beyond course. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give... Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.



Tips For Partners, Family And Friends



For partners

Unlike you who have experienced pregnancy and childbirth, your partner has to wait until baby is here to start adjusting to parenthood. Ideally, they help you through pregnancy and childbirth, but the realities of parenthood only sink in once they get to meet baby. Which is, coincidentally, the time when their reality truly gets checked. A baby changes their role and responsibilities, and at this time their mind may also be more vulnerable for mental health issues. The information and tips in this e-guide are not only limited to you, mum. They are also applicable to your partner. is why there are things they can take on to help you cope:

- Become involved in day-to-day tasks related to caring for your pregnant partner, new baby and the household.
- Learn along your pregnant partner from an online course like the [Pregnancy, Birth & Beyond series](#); if something unexpected happens, you need to know what to do!

- Accept offers of support from friends or family members or organise someone to help with meals, housework and childcare.
- Plan some time as a couple and try to do something you both enjoy.
- Be aware of your own health and wellbeing. Make sure you exercise, relax and set aside time for yourself so you are in the emotional space to help your partner through pregnancy and childbirth, and into postpartum.

When a new parent is experiencing struggle with their mental wellness, family and friends might need to 'take the initiative' — we've listed some ways how you can do this.

My husband was fantastic ... he spent as much time as he could at home helping with the children.

For family and friends

If you're worried about someone who is pregnant or has recently had a baby, tell them you are concerned about them and offer your support. You might not understand fully what they are going through, but it can be a huge help for them just knowing you're there for them. Encourage them to get professional support. Remember that mental health conditions are common around the time of having a baby. Encourage the pregnant mum to see a health professional if you are concerned about them. You may need to make the initial phone call and take them to the first appointment.

- Choose a time when you are both calm and not too distracted and talk about some of the things you've noticed. It may be useful to look at this E-Guide together. Try to be understanding.
- Spend time listening, without feeling the need to offer solutions.
- Offer to help with cooking, housework or looking after the baby (or older children) but try not to take over.
- Be aware that while a new mother may need assistance, she may also need some space. Being surrounded by many visitors — however well meaning — can be exhausting.



COVID-19: Protecting Your Mental Wellbeing

We'll not explain how COVID-19 has altered your mental health; you know it best yourself. However, keep in mind that pregnant women are more vulnerable to mental difficulties and the restrictions and changes we are dealing with, stress and anxiety aren't unexpected. Indeed, new data suggests that 1 in 2 mums have struggled with their mental wellbeing during the pandemic. Instead, ignoring the ever-evolving information and the reasons why mental health is in decline in this pandemic, we offer you a practice to help with anxiety and a list of questions where you can start when talking to your healthcare practitioners about changes to your pregnancy and birth plan.

It's short and sweet: *Consider not following the news.* Long-term this might not be practical, but for short-term stress relief it works. Take a (social) media pause, turn the channel when news come on. Tell your loved ones to keep you on the loop if something important happens during your media detox – non-pandemic related. If this isn't doable, consider limiting the news to key times: maybe check in the morning or during lunch, and leave evenings free so you can sleep better.



It's important that you understand and are aware of these changes. Again, questions are your friend. Ask your doctor:

- How are you accessible during the pandemic? Do you hold online practice?
- Are there online alternatives to antenatal classes where I can meet and talk to other pregnant women? Look into enrolling on our Pregnancy, Birth & Beyond Series!
- How can I ensure that I am safe when visiting my doctor's office or going to the hospital?
- How can I expect COVID-19 concerns at the hospital to affect my delivery?
- Will there be changes in terms of the medications that I may receive, or the number of people present in the delivery room? Can my birth partner be in the room?
- What happens to me and baby if I contract the virus?
- What about the vaccine?

Because the pandemic varies in severity geographically, it is important to get the data from your local services. Ask questions that are specific to your health.

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Final words

The only perfect family is the one you currently have. Not the one other people think you should have. Same goes for your mental wellbeing. You are doing the best you can. Remember that accepting help does not make you weak; it makes you strong. It makes you capable of seeing something is not right and taking steps to protect yourself as best you can. We gave you statistics earlier, about how many mums experience mental health imbalance during pregnancy and postpartum. Those numbers are never the whole story. The whole story is your thoughts, feelings, and actions. The whole story are everyone around you even beyond baby and partner: your family, friends, colleagues, medical team, a random person you used to pass on your walk, the familiar checkout person at your local grocers... The whole story is that you deserve to feel like you got this. Because you do.

You do have to carry and prepare your baby for life by yourself. Only you can do that for them. But other people can carry you while you are busy with growing a new life and adjusting physically and emotionally to all those changes that are inevitable. Let them do that. Embrace that love and support. Pregnancy and motherhood is hard. So allow yourself to accept that some people and some things can make it a little bit easier.

Much love,

Lola & Lykke Team