



# Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week 2021

## What is Maternal Mental Health?

#maternalmentalhealthmatters

“Every day felt like I was in a fog, I felt exhausted but just didn't understand why? I wish I had known about support groups then “mum of 1)

There are many mental health problems which can occur around the time of having a baby. Depression is the most commonly known perinatal mental health problem. Post-natal depression occurs after having a baby and Antenatal depression occurs during pregnancy.

It can happen to anyone and there can be many causes.

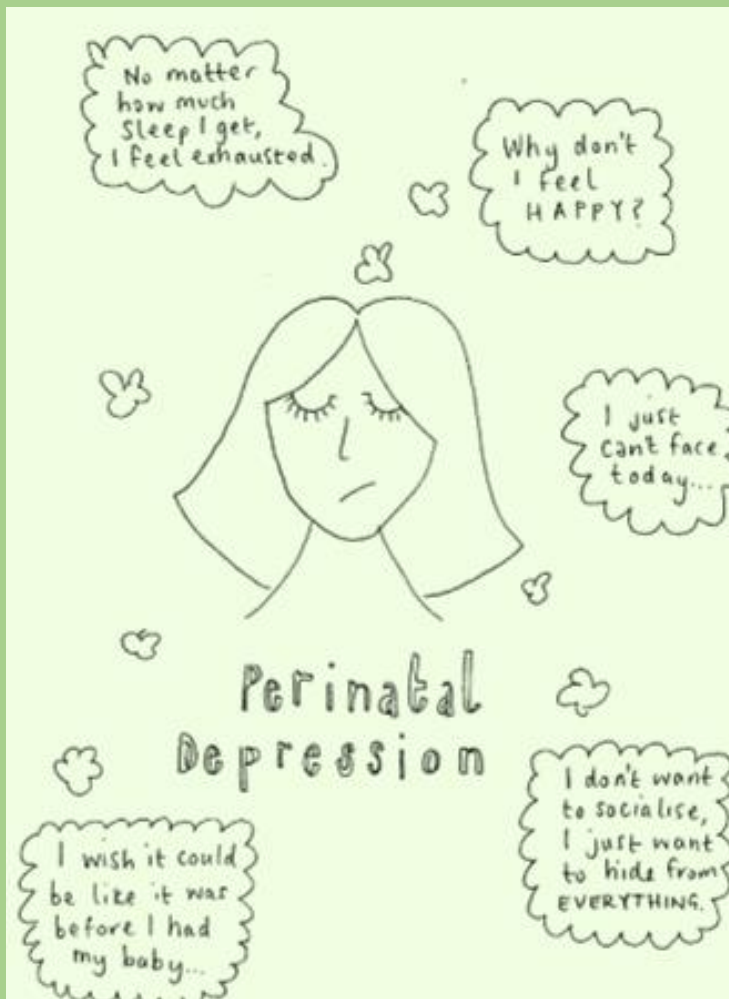
Signs of depression might include feeling down, losing interest in things, struggling to sleep or having very low energy, having poor concentration, feeling bad about yourself, feeling agitated and irritable or feeling really slowed down.

Depression is treatable and support is available.

Sometimes when really struggling with depression it can involve having suicidal thoughts or thoughts of harming the baby.

If you or someone you care about has thoughts like these it is vital to seek professional mental health support. Help is available.

You can speak with your GP, call NHS Direct on 111 or if you feel things are unsafe go to A and E using 999 if needed. Specialist mental health professionals can work with you and your family to understand your experience and to find a safe way forwards together.



Anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) can commonly occur around the time of having a baby.

When growing a family we are biologically programmed to be more aware of danger and to worry more about keeping our baby safe from harm – this is nature’s way of ensuring our young survive. It’s not our fault! Sometimes this natural instinct can go into over drive and we can develop an anxiety disorder or OCD

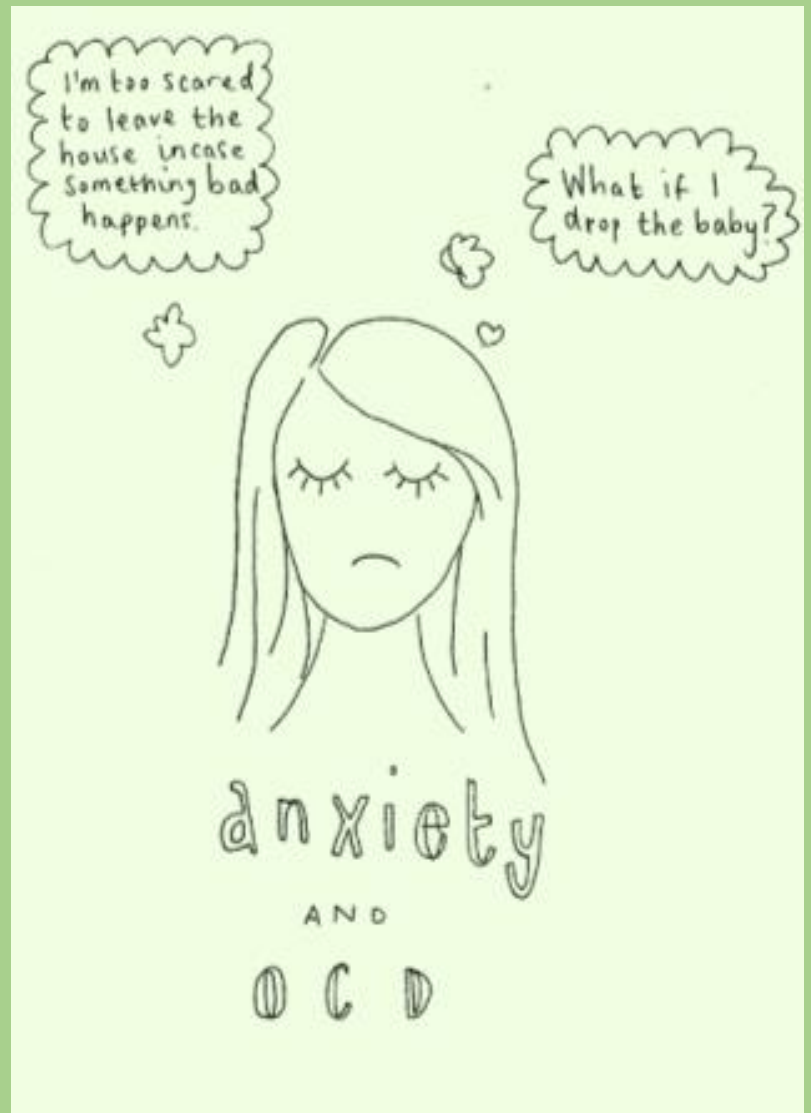
Talking therapy is available to help regain control from anxiety and OCD.

Struggling with trauma can be more likely during the perinatal period. It may be that we have experienced traumatic things in our past which get stirred up by having a baby or we may experience trauma directly related to pregnancy and giving birth.

Some expectant parents struggle with tokophobia., which is an intense fear of childbirth. Sometimes this can be because they have had a difficult birth experience before.

If you think you or your loved one might be struggling with trauma or have tokophobia speak with your GP or midwife who can direct you to specialist support.

“I can’t even think about the birth without crying and going in to panic. I feel like I can’t breathe and everyone just says you’ll be fine” (mum who was 8mth pregnant at the time)



To find out about Maternal Mental Health support available in Greater Manchester go to our webpage

[Pregnancy, family and mental health - Mental Health \(gmhsc.org.uk\)](http://gmhsc.org.uk)



## Post - Partum Psychosis

"The fear I felt was so overwhelming. I just thought something really really bad was going to happen to them, It was my third baby , but I felt so out of control and scared, then I was admitted to hospital where I received the best care" ( mum of 3)

To hear more about other people's experience of and recovery from perinatal mental health problems watch our animation

<https://youtu.be/dOUqjKXrmek>

Another mental health problem which can happen after giving birth is postpartum psychosis. This acute condition usually develops suddenly after giving birth or during the early days of parenthood. For some people it can occur when stopping breast feeding.

Signs of postpartum psychosis can include being unable to settle or sleep , feeling agitated, frightened and confused, feeling very low or very high in mood, having hallucinations, feeling paranoid or suspicious or having a fixation on something which other people don't seem bothered by, don't believe or don't understand - this might be a delusion . This condition affects approximately 1 in 500 postnatal women, so it is not very common but can be incredibly distressing. There is help available -

If you or your family think you might have postpartum psychosis you can access urgent help by calling NHS Direct 111 or if at risk you can go directly to A and E using 999 if needed. Specialist help is available for you and your family to help you in your recovery.