

Anxiety Management

For pregnant and postpartum women regarding COVID 19

With the current focus on COVID-19 and the almost constant churn of updates in the news and various platforms of print and social media, supporting our pregnant and postpartum women through this time is vital in helping you and your family through what remains a very special time in your lives.

As a pregnant woman and/or new mum, you may be feeling more vulnerable than other members of our community and experiencing worries on many fronts including the following:

1. Am I more likely to get sick if I am pregnant?
2. What will the impact of the virus be on my unborn baby?
3. What will happen to my antenatal appointments?
4. Is it safe to go to the hospital for antenatal check-ups?
5. Will I be allowed a support person at the birth? And can I have visitors on the postnatal ward?
6. Can I breastfeed?
7. Can relatives hold my baby?
8. My partner is out of work how will we manage financially?
9. My family can't come from interstate to help.
10. What about my baby shower?
11. Who will look after the other kids how will I cope with Kindy and school closures?

Pregnancy and breastfeeding information and links

Obtaining information directly from government and scientifically reputable international sources is the ideal way of ensuring that we are getting the most up-to-date and accurate information. The following are links to sources that you can access regularly for updates on COVID-19, and pregnancy and breastfeeding and government advice on response & management measures in these difficult times.

Handouts

- [COVID-19 and pregnancy](#)
- [COVID-19 and breastfeeding](#)

Websites

- [QLD Government pregnant and breastfeeding women](#)
- [Head to Health](#)
- [Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - Queensland Health](#)
- [COVID-19 & Your Child – Children's Health Queensland](#)
- [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) Resources – Queensland Aboriginal & Islander Health Council](#)
- [Australian Gov Department of Health - Coronavirus Health Alert](#)
- [Australian Government Website](#)
- [Coping with COVID-19 related anxiety](#)
- [COVID-19 updates for pregnant women and their families](#)

Videos

- [Reduce the risk in pregnancy](#)
- [Finding the right information and continuing with care in pregnancy](#)

App

- [Australian Government Coronavirus App](#)

How do I know if my anxiety and worry is excessive?

Certain amounts of anxiety are natural and understandable. However, sometimes anxiety can become excessive and interfere with our ability to function and more support may be required during these times.

The following are signs that anxiety is getting the better of you.

- Excessive worry about becoming unwell when all precautions have been taken and not being able to stop worrying which then interferes with your daily activities
- Lack of sleep or difficulty eating because of anxiety
- Feeling nervous on edge, restless and anxious most of the day and being unable to relax
- Focusing excessively on social and other media about coronavirus
- Feeling easily annoyed and irritable

How can you manage your anxiety at this difficult time?

1. Name the worry and acknowledge your feelings

- Name the core worry - Is it about getting sick? Is it worry about baby's health? Is it worry about money? Is it worry that you will not get the support after the baby is born?
- Name the feelings – I am feeling anxious
- Try to avoid “fueling the fire” of your worry
- Stay away from disturbing social media posts
- Ask family members to discuss neutral topics

2. Focus on what is in your control

- Find out information you need from your midwife, GP and obstetrician and reliable resources such as above – write a list of questions before your next appointment
- Plan
 - Have all your important phone numbers in one place
 - Who will be your support person in hospital
 - Who will help out with the other children
 - Do you have all the groceries you need or who can help with this?
 - Do you know how your appointments with your midwife and child health will be held – by telephone, clinic or hospital

3. Managing anxious thoughts

- After naming the worry come back to the present
- Identify an activity that you enjoy and get immersed in it – playing with the kids, reading, listening to music, cleaning out a cupboard, making a scrap book with inspirational quotes, getting out in the garden, trying a craft activity, trying a new recipe

4. Relaxation and mindfulness

Some people find yoga, meditation and slow breathing helpful

- Simple relaxation exercises:
 - **Mindful breathing**
Close your eyes, relax in a chair or on the bed. Notice your feet resting on the ground. Focus on your breathing. Observe each breath as it comes in, and goes out, and in, and out. If you notice your thoughts straying, bring them back to your breathing. If any sounds around you claim your attention (the doorbell, birds chirping, sound of traffic), notice the sound, but bring your attention back to your breathing. You can do this for ten breaths (or for 1 minute, or 3 minutes, or 5 minutes), and slowly open your eyes.
 - **Square breathing**
Breathe in to a count of 1-2-3-4. Hold for 1-2-3-4. Breathe out for 1-2-3-4. Hold for 1-2-3-4. Do this for three to five breaths, or until you feel calmer.

Links and practical tools

The following links have some useful information and tools to help with anxiety and worry in these difficult times:

- [Gidget Foundation](#)
- [Dr Russel Harris](#)
- [Mind the Bump](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Self-care planning fact sheet and templates](#)
- [Clinical resources](#)
- ['Mindfulness in everyday life' fact sheet](#)
- ['Quick relaxation techniques' fact sheet](#)
- [Guided meditation videos](#)
- [Living with worry and anxiety amidst global uncertainty \(UK English version\)](#)

Staying socially connected

While you are social distancing, it's important to think about how you can maintain a sense of connection with your support people.

- Use Face time/ WhatsApp/ Video calls/ Facebook groups to connect with family and friends and share photos and memories of this very special time and share creative ideas to keep yourself and kids entertained at home
- If your mothers' group has been cancelled, or you are just looking for online support, you can check out these Facebook groups:
- [Mama Tribe](#): Both online community groups and real-life meet-ups, with over 55 local groups across Australia
- Mum Central: Australia-wide Facebook groups, including [Baby Mums Australia](#) and [Pregnancy Mums Australia](#)

Crisis Support

The following links are for services for mums to be and new mums that can be used in a crisis:

PANDA's National Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Helpline

1300 726 306

Monday – Friday, 9am – 7.30pm

AEST/AEDT

Gold Coast Mental Health Acute Care team

1300 642 255

24/7

Gidget Foundation

The Gidget foundation offers telehealth psychology services for mums to be and new mums
Gidget Psychological service “Start Talking” Skype/Telephone – Bulk-billed

starttalking@gidgetfoundation.org.au

1300 851 758

What do I tell my kids?

This Video from Emerging Minds Australia provides helpful information about talking to children about traumatic events such as the Coronavirus

- [Talking to children about natural disasters, traumatic events, or worries about the future – video](#)

How can family members help:

- Be aware of signs of excessive worry and psychological distress
- Try not to minimise a woman’s worries or offer false reassurance – tell her it is natural to feel this way
- Try to address some concerns with problem solving together and encourage her to talk to her health care provider
- Encourage a routine and do activities together to take her mind off her worries – playing a board game or video game, getting the baby’s room ready, setting up an obstacle course in the house for the kids
- Do relaxation and meditation activities together
- Get help for yourself if you are feeling overwhelmed by anxiety
- Encourage regular rest and good sleep habits
- Find ways to celebrate the birth and newborn baby when plans to celebrate with family and friends are disrupted
- Create a memory book writing down messages from friends, grandparents and relatives and keeping cards and mementos
- Get family to record messages and lullabies