

Quick Tips for Emotional Wellness During Pregnancy and After Childbirth

Think SNOWBALL!

SLEEP:

Your brain needs as long a stretch of sleep as possible to regulate mood. With your pediatrician's approval, aim for a 4-6 hours stretch as soon as your baby can go longer between feedings or is taking a bottle. Have your partner or another family member take over a feeding, or arrange for help to nap during the day when able. If you can't fall to sleep easily, talk with your healthcare provider.

NUTRITION:

Continue taking a high-quality pre-natal vitamin for at least a year after childbirth. Avoid caffeine, sweets, and processed carbohydrates and be sure to eat protein at every snack and meal. Ask your partner or family to make a plate of quick foods such as meats, cheese, nuts, or protein bars for you to snack on during the day.

OMEGA-3s:

Fish oils are proven to prevent and treat anxiety and depression in new moms. Up to 3000 mg combined EPA and DHA (look on the back of the label) are proven safe during pregnancy and nursing. Freezing the capsules may make them easier to digest.

WALK:

Daily gentle exercise such as walking outside or yoga/stretching can make a huge difference in mood. Go slowly and listen to your body.

BABY BREAKS:

Try to get regularly scheduled breaks with your child(ren) in the care of others. Ideally, you should get at least two hours at a time, three times a week. If this is not feasible at this time, get as much a break as you can. Make yourself some tea, call a friend, read a magazine or paint your toes after asking a support person to be with your children even briefly.

ADULT TIME:

None of us are built to be alone with children 24/7. Join an online group, reach out to a friend very day, and journal, even when you are not feeling well. Find safe people to share your feelings with on a regular basis.

LIQUIDS:

Be sure to drink two large pitchers of water a day. Dehydration can trigger symptoms of anxiety and fuzzy thinking.

LAUGHTER:

Whether through watching a funny movie, talking with a good friend, or tickling your children, make time for silliness and laughter each day. If you find it difficult to connect to this aspect of yourself, it's time to reach out for professional help.

Seek professional counseling and speak with your doctor if you continue to feel as though you are not yourself. Suffering in silence benefits no one. You deserve to feel well.

For more information on resources and support, please contact your healthcare provider, look at the Utah Maternal Mental Health website, www.utahmmhc.com, and/or call Postpartum Support International at (800) 944-4PPD (944-4773) www.postpartum.net