



MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

HONOURING MOTHERS, BUILDING THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Each year, we observe **Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week**, which highlights the emotional and psychological wellbeing of mothers during pregnancy and the first year after birth. This year, it takes place from **4 May to 10 May 2026**.

Maternal mental health refers to a mother's emotional, psychological and social wellbeing during pregnancy and after childbirth. It encompasses how a mother feels, thinks and copes with daily life, including stress, mood changes, and her ability to care for herself and her baby.

Led globally by organisations like Postpartum Support International, this week aims to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and remind mothers and their communities that support is available.

Maternal mental health challenges are common. **Worldwide, around 10% of pregnant women and 13% of new mothers experience depression or anxiety**, and in high-stress environments. One in three women may face a mental health challenge. Returning to work adds further pressure, as balancing childcare and job responsibilities increases stress and the risk of anxiety or burnout.



WHY MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH CAN BE CHALLENGING

Motherhood is joyful, but also demanding. Some unique challenges include:

- **Hormonal shifts** affecting mood and emotional regulation
- **Sleep deprivation** increasing irritability and anxiety
- **Changing identity and roles**, as priorities and responsibilities shift
- **Stress** from balancing work and family responsibilities, including pressure to perform professionally while caring for a baby
- **Isolation and unrealistic expectations**, often worsened by social media
- **Guilt and self-doubt**, feeling “not enough” despite doing your best.

Recognising these challenges is crucial, because untreated maternal mental health issues affect not just mothers, but also infant bonding, family relationships, and workplace performance.



PRACTICAL WAYS MOTHERS CAN PROTECT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

Even small steps can make a big difference:

1. Prioritise rest:

Power nap when possible, accept help and protect sleep windows.

2. Focus on essentials:

Let non-critical tasks wait. Focus on safety, feeding and bonding.

3. Build micro-connections:

Text a friend, call a family member, or join a mom's support group, even briefly.

4. Practice self-compassion and positive self-talk:

Replace "I should be better" with "I am learning and doing my best".

5. Limit comparison triggers:

Step back from social media or situations that create guilt or pressure.

6. Seek professional support early:

If sadness, anxiety, or intrusive thoughts persist for more than two weeks, or interfere with daily life, reach out to a therapist or a doctor.



HOW COLLEAGUES AND LOVED ONES CAN HELP

Maternal mental health is a shared responsibility. Partners, family, friends and colleagues can:

- Offer **practical, hands-on support** (for example, babysitting for a few hours while the mom catches up on sleep or engages in self-care activities)
- **Normalise the full range of emotions** in motherhood
- **Encourage professional help** when needed
- **Listen without judgment** or immediate problem-solving
- **Check in consistently** – not just in the early weeks.



SUPPORTING MOTHERS BENEFITS EVERYONE

Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week reminds us that **healthy mothers strengthen families, workplaces and communities.** By talking openly about mental health, offering practical help and prioritising self-care, we reduce stigma and encourage healing. **Mothers do not have to navigate this journey alone – and we should not let them.**

