



Resource Sheet for Families: Seeking Postnatal Support

One of the biggest myths about parenting is that it is 'natural' and that everyone should instinctively know how to 'parent'. This is closely followed by the belief that parents bond straight away with their baby when they're born. In reality, it can take time for a new parent to bond with their baby and to experience the feelings of love they expect.

Myths about parenthood often cause parents to avoid seeking professional help when they need it most. They may feel guilty, worried that they are a 'bad parent', or fear that others will judge them negatively. There is no shame in parents seeking help from a professional if they are finding parenting challenging. Postnatal health professionals can help with transitioning to parenthood, managing routines, settling, sleeping, feeding, and postnatal depression or anxiety. They can give parents the information and tools they need to be confident and empowered in their parenting role.

Myth Busting: "I don't need postnatal support because ..."

I'm not crying/feeling anxious all the time, I'm just a bit overwhelmed. Feeling overwhelmed at times is normal and to be expected. However, reaching out for professional support with setting up routines and learning strategies can still be helpful. Postnatal health professionals can also often identify if a parent has, or is at risk of developing, postnatal depression or anxiety.

I was fine with my first baby, I should be able to cope with my second (third, fourth, etc.) baby. Each pregnancy, birth, parenting experience and child is different. With additional children there will also be greater demands on a parent's time and resources. It is not unusual for parents and carers to need some help with setting up routines and finding strategies to meet the needs of both their new baby and their older child or children.

My relative/friend/colleague is a great parent—their advice should be enough. While usually well-meant, advice from other parents is not always helpful. It can leave parents feeling that their parenting skills are not as good as others. Additionally, advice from other parents often does not consider the specific situation, needs and beliefs of the parent needing support.

I'm a dad/non-birthing parent, so I shouldn't need postnatal support. Fathers and non-birthing parents, such as those in same-sex couples, who have used a gestational carrier, or adopted a child, may also need parenting support. Non-birthing parents can also be affected by postnatal depression or anxiety. Postnatal health professionals help non-birthing parents in the same way that they support mothers who have given birth.

I should be focussing on my baby, not on myself. Looking after themselves physically, mentally and emotionally is essential for parental health and wellbeing. It's also important to help parents be at their best to care for and connect with their child. Postnatal health professionals help parents and carers to find ways to take care of themselves and to give themselves some 'time out' from their parenting role.

The Infants' Home's Sydney Hope Family Cottage Service

The Infants' Home's qualified Child and Family Health Nurses conduct home visits and provide support via telephone and/or clinic consultations. They get to know each family to understand their individual challenges, strengths and situations. They help parents and carers set realistic, achievable goals and to reach these by giving them practical advice and strategies and referrals to other support if needed. Families can receive support for as long as they need.

Support is available to parents of children from birth to five, and includes:

- Lactation support
- Sleep and settling
- Feeding and introducing solids
- Parental wellbeing
- Adjusting to parenthood
- Understanding their child
- Referrals and connecting them with other services and community resources.

Families can self-refer to Sydney Hope Family Cottage or they may be referred by an early childhood health nurse, GP or other health practitioner.

Contact The Infants' Home Sydney Hope Cottage Postnatal Service

0431 360 452 | shfcbooking@theinfantshome.org.au | theinfantshome.org.au/services

Other Postnatal and Parenting Support Services

Mental Health and Helplines

- cope.org.au 1300 740 398
- healthdirect.gov.au 1800 022 222
- health.nsw.gov.au 1800 011 511
- panda.org.au 1300 726 306
- parentline.org.au 1300 1300 52
- royalwomen.org.au/mothersafe 02 9382 6539 or 1800 647 848

Safety, Sleep and Settling

- rednose.org.au 1300 998 698
- tresillian.org.au 1300 272 736
- karitane.com.au 1300 227 464

Infant Feeding

- breastfeeding.asn.au 1800 686 268
- health.nsw.gov.au

Child Development

- raisingchildren.net.au
- zerotothree.org