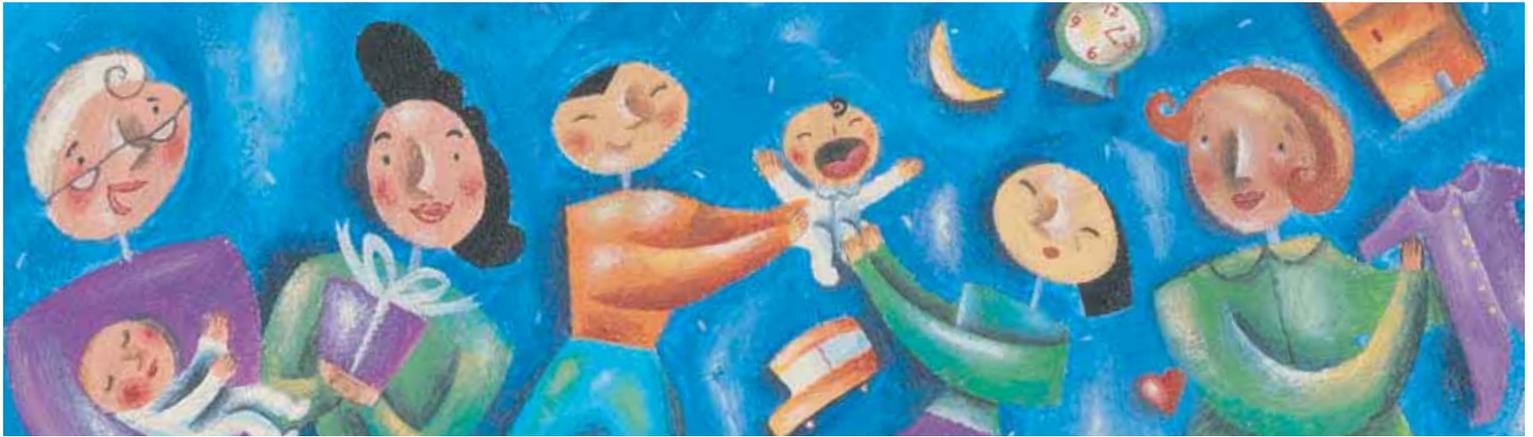


[www.latrobe.edu.au/csmch/prism](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/csmch/prism)



# Program of Resources, Information and Support for Mothers



# Mothers' Health Matters Too!

Women get lots of information when they have a baby.

Often the focus of all this information is the baby.

Your health is important too! As mothers, we often worry about our children's and family's health and wellbeing, but put our own health and recovery on hold.

*"Let's face it, everyone knows mothers are the backbone of the family's health.*

*We need to give ourselves permission to look after our wellbeing, or everything else falls in a heap."*

There are many aspects to feeling healthy, and able to cope with the demands of being a mother.

For many women getting some regular time out to relax or catch up on sleep is important, for others keeping up a sport or physical activity is helpful. For most of us, spending time with friends or family also helps.

Whatever helps *you* to feel healthy and well, is important for you to prioritise.



## Did you know ?

- 95% of women report one or more health problems in the 1<sup>st</sup> six months after childbirth.
- 1 in 6 mothers experience depression following the birth of a baby (8,000 – 12,000 Victorian women a year).
- These problems frequently go undetected.
- Women often find it hard to find someone to talk to about these issues.
- Women who do find someone who listens with empathy describe this as helpful.
- Isolation, lack of support and few opportunities for time out from infant care are key issues for women experiencing depression and other health problems.

# Taking care of you : your own health and wellbeing

Making time to look after your own health and well-being can be difficult and seem like hard work at times.

We need to be creative about how to give ourselves some time out.

Sometimes it is possible to do things we enjoy, with the baby. Other times, having short breaks from baby care helps.

Some tips and suggestions from other mothers about making and getting 'time out' :

- ☺ Let your family & friends help! If they want to get you a cuppa, cook dinner, tidy up or hang out the washing - let them!
- ☺ Have a bath (alone!), while your partner or someone else cares for the children in another room.
- ☺ Time out for mums is easier if you have something lined up for the kids that they like. It makes the separation easier for both of you.
- ☺ Go to places where children are accepted and welcome and where other mothers will be. Eg. cry-baby film sessions, local cafés, walking in the park.
- ☺ Sleep in separate rooms sometimes, so at least one of you gets some rest - and then let the one who was up half the night, sleep in (at least on the weekends)

*"Women who manage to get even a little time out on a regular basis say it makes a huge difference to how they feel and cope with the demands of being a mother."*



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The PRISM Project has been working on some resources for mothers with young babies. **'The Peninsula for Mothers'** is about you as a mother in your local community.

We have written it as a guide for you to services and activities that have a focus on you - you as a person, with your own needs and interests - plus a baby!

We hope that the information contained here will help you to:

- take care of your *own* health and well-being
- meet other mothers and stay in touch with family and friends
- enjoy being out and about on the Peninsula with your baby
- take advantage of local services that are there to support you as a mother.

It is available to read at your Maternal and Child Health Centre and other places locally.

# Have you seen these Posters and Stickers ?

The businesses and organisations displaying this material are showing their support for mothers in our local community.

Their participation in the PRISM Project is valued.

Do you know other places that are mother-baby friendly?

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# "..and how are you feeling?"

**Women experience** a whole range of emotions after giving birth.

Joy, elation, wonder and relief are all common feelings.

So are feelings of being overwhelmed, exhausted, sad or depressed.

*"Motherhood is one of the most rewarding and demanding jobs..."*

The responsibility for a tiny infant can make us look at life differently. It marks a new beginning. It can also make us feel very vulnerable.

Caring for a baby is both rewarding and demanding. We need all the support we can get and sometimes we feel very alone.

*"It all seemed to be getting on top of me, that this baby was just crying non-stop..."*

**Feeling depressed is not uncommon.**

Recent research shows that about 1 in 6 women experience depression following the birth of a baby. In Victoria that means around 10,000 women every year.

## What do women find helpful when they feel depressed?

### ☑ **Finding someone to talk to**

Many women who've been depressed say that letting someone know how you're feeling can be an important turning point. Having another person acknowledge what's happening helps share the burden.

### ☑ **Sharing the work**

As a community we often forget just how much work is involved in caring for a baby. There is the feeding and washing, the getting up at night, the lifting and carrying. All these physical demands can leave you feeling exhausted and completely drained.

### ☑ **Time for yourself**

This can seem like something that is gone forever when you have a baby! Yet becoming a mother doesn't mean our own needs to be cared for and to pursue our own interests just disappear.

