

# Well Women Newsletter

Issue 1, Term 1, 2009



## Who Are Well Women?

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Well Women is a group for women who are suffering from (undiagnosed or diagnosed) Postnatal Depression. We meet every week at a venue in Franklin and on one week, we have a group discussion with a Maternal Mental Health representative or a qualified Social Worker (depending on availability), about anything that is 'on top' and playing on our minds.

On the second week, we have a speaker who is invited to come along and share their expertise with us. This could be a clinical psychologist, dietician, someone specialising in bonding & attachment, a masseuse or anyone who might be able to assist with the path to recovery for PND sufferers.

We are a Non-Profit Organisation who rely on sponsorship for childcare - an essential component in the effectiveness of the group

sessions - and for other aspects of running the group.

We welcome new members and offer an initial discussion with a social worker, who can assess the needs of an individual more effectively.

Postnatal Depression or Postnatal Distress (encapsulating psychosis) is a condition that can affect the whole family. Well Women strive to treat the distress holistically through talking therapies as well as other therapies. There isn't one cure for this disease and so new speakers and new topics are introduced each term.

**For all enquiries, call Kim Myhill on 021 1588 134 (daytime) or 09 232 8581 (evenings and weekends) or e-mail [nzwellwomen@hotmail.com](mailto:nzwellwomen@hotmail.com). Or find us at <http://nzwellwomen.wordpress.com>**

## What is PND?

PND - or Postnatal Depression - is a mental illness. Women with PND can experience a prolonged lowness of mood, reduced interest in activities, tiredness and disturbances of sleep and appetite. Most new mothers will experience these symptoms but what distinguishes PND is the severity and the duration. PND affects around fifteen percent of mothers and there is no specific cause.

If you have experienced depression or bi-polar disorder, make sure that you let your lead maternity carer know as this does increase the risk of PND. While the 'baby blues' soon pass, PND stays around and gets slowly more severe. If you feel something is wrong, it's time to do something about it. If you feel that you aren't being heard, shout louder and keep asking for help until you get it!

Fathers also risk getting depression too.

How are you feeling?

- I feel numb and empty – I don't have feelings.
- I feel sad and tearful a lot of the time.
- I no longer enjoy the activities that used to make me happy.
- I feel inadequate and that I can't cope.
- I'm very anxious that something is wrong with my baby.

What are you doing?

- I need to check constantly and be reassured.
- I'm really focussed on how hard this is and on coping with 'baby problems' like colic or reflux but not on my own feelings.
- I'm always looking for help but it isn't enough.
- I can't sleep when the baby is sleeping.



## Useful Contacts

### Phone Numbers

- Awhinatia Community Mental Health Centre - 09 2951200
- Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand - Phone: 09 300 7010
- Lifeline - 09 5222 999
- Manukau Community Mental Health Team - 09 261 3700

### Websites

- [www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)
- [www.depression.org.nz](http://www.depression.org.nz)
- [www.mothersmatter.co.nz](http://www.mothersmatter.co.nz)
- [www.outoftheblue.org.nz](http://www.outoftheblue.org.nz)
- [www.eggmaternity.co.nz](http://www.eggmaternity.co.nz)
- [www.spinz.org.nz](http://www.spinz.org.nz) (Suicide Prevention)
- [www.centreforattachment.com](http://www.centreforattachment.com)
- [www.pnd.org.nz](http://www.pnd.org.nz)
- [www.pnpsupport.org.nz](http://www.pnpsupport.org.nz) (Postnatal Psychosis support group)
- [www.fatherandchild.org.nz](http://www.fatherandchild.org.nz)



## Important Strategies for Recovery

- Learn about postnatal depression and psychosis, and the treatment options. Get information to help make sense of what has happened, and learn what to expect, so you can make informed choices about what is best for you.
- Participate in decisions about your treatment.
- Become familiar with any early warning signs of relapse, and be part of developing a plan for maintaining wellness. Health professionals involved in your care will help with this.
- Receive treatment and support from people you trust, who expect the best for you and are able to accept how you are at any time.
- Have the continuing support of family or whanau and friends, who know about the condition and understand what they can do to support your recovery. Practical support with running the house, child and baby care, and opportunities for time out are important.
- Take the opportunity to recuperate – to sleep more if you need to, relax, after an acute episode be encouraged to become active as you are able.
- Take steps to improve your general health. If at all possible exercise each day, eat a healthy diet, and have plenty of fluids - these will help you to recover and keep well.
- Be realistic in what you expect of yourself, especially during the episode. When things seem too hard, take them on one step at a time.
- Do something enjoyable each day, and try to focus on positive thoughts and memories.
- Find the ways of coping that work best for you. These are different for each person, but are a critical first step on the path to recovery.
- Avoid or really cut down the use of alcohol and illegal drugs, as these may worsen your condition and increase the chances of relapse.
- Talk to your health professionals if you are considering stopping treatment and work together with them to find some compromise that will ensure continuing wellness but address your concerns about the treatment. If you are on medication, it is very important that the decision to stop taking it is made with the input of your doctor and anyone else involved in your treatment.

Information kindly supplied by the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand/ For more information, please contact the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, or visit their website: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/ctdisplay.php?ID=596&condition=19&p=&fp=>

## Ways Your Partner, Family, and Friends Can Help

PND affects the whole family (and some would say, arises because of the whole family's circumstances, both past and present). It is in the whole family's interests to do what they can to support and assist - criticism, too much unsolicited advice, or believing the woman has somehow 'caused' it to happen, are not helpful. Here are some ways in which partners can provide support:

- ★ include yourself in visits to or with the doctor, healthcare worker (ask her first)
- ★ take a positive lead with housework and childcare - try to do things without being asked
- ★ get up to the baby during the night. A breastfed baby can be brought to the mother to minimize her sleep disruption.
- ★ be a buffer for the mother - screen phonecalls and visits, and keep all unnecessary tasks and demands to a minimum
- ★ don't invite people for dinner unless they're going to bring it and help fold the washing!!
- ★ develop a support system for yourself too - partners are also post-natally distressed sometimes, and you may feel isolated and unsure what to do - find someone to talk to
- ★ accept that anger, frustration, and despair may all be expressed (by both of you) when things are difficult - sometimes seemingly irrationally. Try to make some time to talk about how things are for both of you when emotions aren't running high
- ★ it may seem counter-intuitive, but try just listening to how she feels, without trying to fix it, offer suggestions, solutions, or telling her what she 'should' be doing or feeling (she knows this already ... it makes her feel worse)
- ★ childbirth, night-feeds, and all the attendant demands of a new baby are likely to impact on passion and sexual interest - for many women at this time, sex will feel like just another demand on the 'to do' list - be patient, and remember to offer non-sexual affection and touching
- ★ relationships often suffer at this time - try to keep talking to each other about what is happening. You may also want to consider relationship counselling, especially if you have longstanding issues which seem to be getting worse
- ★ organize some regular and 'special' time alone together - go out to a movie, for a walk, cook dinner and watch a video - these things tend to disappear without you noticing
- ★ it may not seem likely at times, but remember - you will get her back

### ***For visitors (whether friends or family) in addition to some of the things above:***

- ★ keep visits short (unless she wants the company)
- ★ ask when might suit
- ★ make yourself useful - ask if there's anything she'd like from the shop, check the list on the fridge, ask if she'd rather you hold the baby or attend to household tasks (or both, while she has a lie-down or goes out for while)
- ★ offer to collect/drop other children at school, kindy, or daycare
- ★ make your own cup of tea, and one for her too
- ★ make her a sandwich for lunch/prepare the dinner so it just needs reheating
- ★ bring some labour-saving gifts and treats (disposable nappies, frozen dinners, healthy snacks, a magazine, something personal for her, rather than the baby)

## Professional Help

It is really important to seek a professional opinion if concerned in any way, but not always easy to know where to start. Talk to someone you already have contact with and trust about what you are experiencing eg. your GP, midwife, or Plunket Nurse. They may be able to help, or refer you to someone else who can.

## Physical health

It is always important to have your physical health checked out first. Ask your GP to check your thyroid function, iron levels, and general health. Attend to any breast infections immediately - they can rapidly develop into something more serious (sometimes infection-related delirium has been mistaken for post-natal psychosis). Remember also that if you've had a caesarian delivery or other complications, your body needs time to recover.

## Medication

There is a lot of misinformation about the advisability of taking medication while pregnant or when breastfeeding, much of it unnecessarily negative. It is very important to get good information from a recognized source, and to weigh the benefits of taking/not taking it for you, the baby, and your family, before making a decision. Your GP may prescribe medication for you eg. for depressive symptoms, anxiety, or sleep difficulties, and midwives can also prescribe some very short-term (less than 2 weeks) medication to assist with sleep in the early post-natal phase. He/she should discuss this with you in detail first - what the medication is for, when you should take it, what the alternatives are, and any possible risks to yourself/the baby vs the risks of continuing as is.

With any medication, it is important to take it as prescribed, and discuss with the prescriber any side-effects or intention to stop/change. Stopping some medications suddenly, even if you are feeling better, can lead to a relapse in symptoms. This is a complex area which needs to be considered with a person who has expertise. If you are dissatisfied with the advice given, seek a second opinion.

## Alternative therapies

Some people have found a range of alternative therapies helpful eg. cranial osteopathy seems to work wonders for some distressed babies.

## Counselling and therapy

Many women find it valuable to be able to talk issues through with a person trained to listen and offer guidance and support, but it can be difficult to know where to access these services, and who is the right person eg. counsellor, psychologist, psychiatrist, phone supporter. Getting the right 'fit' between yourself and the person you choose is really important, and it depends on the nature of the issues you want to explore/address, what kind of person you are, and your budget. It's OK to shop around, and to take someone else with you if this will help. You may want to include your partner or other family members also.

Prices will vary from around \$75 - \$130 per hour for private counsellors, psychotherapists, and psychologists, but many will reduce fees for beneficiaries or people on low incomes. Some problems such as panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, post-traumatic responses, and any longstanding or severe depression, may respond best to specialized therapy, and may be needed before any of the other strategies suggested in this booklet can have much effect on how you feel.

## Mental Health Services

The Specialist Maternal Mental Health Team covers all Auckland areas, but require a referral from your GP, midwife, or other specialist service. Any GP or midwife can phone the Team for help and advice.

**If you feel your doctor, counsellor, or other health professional is not the right person for you, you have the right to change or ask for a second opinion.**

## What does Franklin offer?

**Pram walking** - Tuesday and Thursday at 9.30am. Meet at the Pukekohe Netball Court car park. There are usually around 20 women in attendance and they spend an hour or less walking around Pukekohe, socialising and getting exercise, before having a coffee at a local café (optional). Contact Jo Plummer on 09 2363081 for more information or just turn up on the day!

**Music and Movement** - Group for pre-school children on Friday and Mondays at the Anglican Church on the corner of Wesley and Queen Street at 9.30am. Dance and play with your child and then enjoy a drink (juice and biscuits provided) Gold coin donation required. Please call 09 2386768 for further information.

**Time Out for Mums** - Twice monthly (2nd & 4th Thursday of the month during school term time) gathering especially designed to refresh, inspire and encourage mums. The sessions are held at the Waiuku Civic Centre from 9.30am until 11am. Childcare is provided for a gold coin donation. Each class is \$5. Please contact Amanda on 09 9630133 or Kate on 09 2352464 for more information.

**Playcentre** - The philosophy of Playcentre is one of parent participation. Learn alongside your child and interact with others. There are Playcentres at Bombay, Drury, Karaka, Manukau Peninsula, Matakawau, Otua, Patumahoe, Pokeno, Pukekawa, Pukekohe, Te Kauwhata, and Tuakau. Contact 0800 PLAYNZ (0800 752 969) or visit [www.playcentre.org.nz](http://www.playcentre.org.nz)



# Good Nutrition

What you put into your body will greatly influence how you look and feel. Here are some good guidelines to ensure that your food intake is balanced

- 1. Drink plenty of water** - ok, so everywhere you turn now, you hear people telling you to drink lots of water. You may be sick of hearing it, but it's for a good reason - drinking at least 1.5 to 2 litres of water is essential, to keep you hydrated, help flush out toxins and waste products, and manage your appetite. Where possible, avoid coffee, tea, soft drinks and alcohol. Why not try a herbal tea instead?
- 2. Eat plenty of salads, vegetables and fruits** - try adding vegetables (raw, boiled, steamed) to or a small amount of fruit to each meal. Not only are they full of vitamins and minerals, but they are also full of fibre and will give you longer-lasting energy.
- 3. Cut down on fatty meats** - eat more fish, chicken and lean meats. Steer clear of processed and fried meats where possible. Remove any visible fat, and try to bake or grill instead of frying.
- 4. Add variety to your meals** - try recipes that include legumes, grains and vegetables. These foods are full of fibre, and can make an interesting change to your usual meals.
- 5. Snack wisely** - "snack foods" can be highly processed and contain hidden sugar and fat. Instead, opt for a piece of fruit (apples are quick and easy!), air-popped popcorn (no butter or oil!), vegetables (think carrot sticks and salsa....yum!). Low-fat yoghurt is a good source of calcium.

**TAKE YOUR TIME!** Make sure you **eat slowly, chew your food well, and avoid gulping food** - this ensures your food is digested properly (and avoids embarrassing wind!)

**SWEET TEMPTATIONS!** If you can't give up your regular "chocolate fix", why not try cutting back (instead of eating a chocolate bar by yourself, eat half and either share the other half with someone else, or leave the other half for tomorrow. Why not try freezing it - you're sure to eat less). Better still, try to replace the chocolate with something sweet but nutritious - fresh strawberries are a good idea.

**OLD HABITS DIE HARD!** If you are a "nibbler" or find it hard to resist food even when you're not hungry, try chewing some gum. This is an especially good trick while you're preparing dinner!

Information kindly supplied by Bouncing Back After Baby - [www.bbab.co.nz](http://www.bbab.co.nz)

## Our Supporters

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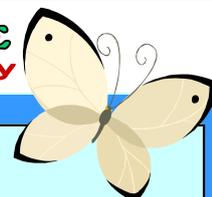


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## Term One Line-up

Well Women sessions are available to those suffering from Postnatal Distress. You will need to be referred in to this group so please contact Kim Myhill on 021 1588134 (daytime) or 09 2328581 (evenings and weekends) or e-mail [nzwellwomen@hotmail.com](mailto:nzwellwomen@hotmail.com) for further information

Week 1	Monday 9th Feb	Well Women group session
Week 2	Monday 16th Feb	Susan Goldstiver, Clinical Psychologist - PND & You!
Week 3	Monday 23rd Feb	Well Women group session
Week 4	Monday 2nd Mar	Lindsey McGregor, Nutritionist - Diet & Recovery
Week 5	Monday 9th Mar	Well Women group session
Week 6	Monday 16th Mar	Maxine McCort, Massage Therapist - The importance of massage in recovery
Week 7	Monday 23rd Mar	EASTER MONDAY
Week 8	Monday 30th Mar	Well Women group session
Week 9	Monday 6th April	Vikki Kelly, Innate. Offering gentle, highly effective strategies to energise thoughts and nourish the mind.
Week 10	Monday 13th April	Well Women group session

Speaker sessions are correct at the time of printing. They may be subject to change

If you have any suggestions or recommendations regarding speakers, please e-mail [nzwellwomen@hotmail.com](mailto:nzwellwomen@hotmail.com)