

## HOW CAN YOU HELP

Anything that reduces the stresses or pressures of motherhood and gives her some space from the physical and emotional demands of 24 hour baby care will be helpful.

Ask her how you can help. Your partner may find it difficult to come up with suggestions but you may wish to offer the following:

- Contact HAPIS or check out our website which contains lots of information and supportive suggestions as to how you can help someone with this illness and/or get support yourself.
- Encourage your partner to accept help from family, friends and relevant professionals.
- Run her a nice relaxing bath.
- Let her to catch up on a couple of hours sleep.
- Treat her to an aromatherapy massage or book her some sessions with a complementary therapist in your area.
- Make sure she is eating nutritious food regularly and not skipping meals.
- Organise a baby sitter and spend a few hours talking with one another or going for a walk, swim etc.
- Try to help with the household tasks and get involved with as much childcare as possible. Just because your partner is at home all day it doesn't mean she can cope with everything.
- Give your partner a few hours to do something unrelated to the new baby (what other job do you do 24/7?).
- You can help with feeding your baby even if it is being breastfed. You can help with night feeds by using either formula or milk expressed earlier by the mother.

For more information on  
Resources and Counselling  
Services

Lorna: 07754-687423

Inverness

Hilton Community Centre

Weekly Meeting  
Wednesday 10-12pm

07833-028289

Ross-Shire number

## **DAD'S NEED TO TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES TOO!**

So

If this leaflet has raised any  
Issues for you, you are invited to  
discuss them in confidence with  
our Counsellor

Website: [www.hapis.org.uk](http://www.hapis.org.uk)

Email: [info@hapis.org.uk](mailto:info@hapis.org.uk)

# H.A.P.I.S. FM

## Fathers Matter

- **Has life changed since the birth of your baby?**
- **Not quite what you were expecting**
- **It is well known that some mums can feel depressed ante/postnatally, but some fathers can get depression too.**
- **1 in every 10 new fathers experience emotional difficulties.**



**An Inverness based self funded group to give friendship, support and information on ante/postnatal illness/depression.**

**Charity No: SC 032228**

## ESPECIALLY FOR FATHERS

Although men don't have to deal with body changes and fluctuating hormone levels, you have your own worries and concerns-exhaustion, lack of sleep, changes in routines, household chores, lack of intimacy, concerns for your partners needs.

You may be feeling rejected emotionally and sexually by your partner as she tries to juggle the extra demands on her time and her body. You may feel hurt, frustrated, or angry if she is hostile, defensive or irritable (a common symptom of depression), or if she seems unable to accept any suggestions or constructive criticism.

Fathers can find their partner's irritability and withdrawal from physical affection more difficult to cope with than the depression itself. Fathers can feel pushed out because of the bond between mother and baby and perceive their baby as a rival, which they then feel guilty about. You may find it hard adjusting to taking second place in your partner's affections.

You may feel pressure to provide extra money and emotional support for your partner and baby.

Anxiety, being tearful, feeling hopeless and a failure as a parent or partner are common symptoms, but it is often easier for men to act out this helplessness and anger. Resentment can surface putting extra strain on their relationships. It may also lead to you feeling violent towards your partner.

Families can find it easier to talk about exhaustion and the physical demands of a new baby, rather than admit emotional fatigue and feeling depressed.

Men are more likely to become depressed if their partner is depressed, if they are having relationship difficulties or if they are unemployed (being able to work and provide for his family is often the main source of a man's sense of worth and self esteem).

## WHERE MOTHERS CAN DEVELOP DEPRESSION, ANTE/POSTNATALLY, FATHERS CAN DEVELOP IT TOO!

Men are often conditioned to view depression as a sign of weakness and therefore unacceptable. Suicide is the leading cause of death in young men. Here at HAPIS FM, we have people who are able to listen to what you are going through and offer you support and information to help you through this difficult time.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR PARTNER

This can be a difficult and frustrating time for partners. It can help if you think of the situation as a short term one that will resolve in time. It is important you look after your own physical and emotional health, as it can be a stressful, demanding and depressing time for you too.

Avoid using too much alcohol or other drugs to block out or numb what you are going through. If you are spending more time at work or with hobbies and feel that your partner doesn't trust you with your baby, speak to each other about how you are feeling.

## EMOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT

**Recovery** from Postnatal illness can be a gradual process and you may feel you can't do much to help. How you **respond** to your partner's illness will influence how well she responds and recovers. She needs your **love, affection and reassurance**. She is still your partner not just the mother of your child. Try to be patient - most fathers are initially confused but supportive of their partner's illness but if it continues for longer than a few months, their support can be replaced by a more critical or punitive manner. This won't help. **Encourage** her to express her feelings freely and try not to be judgemental. Use this time to talk together and communicate how you both are feeling. Remember that postnatal illness like any other mental illness can defy logic! You may feel you haven't much to offer, but there is evidence that by being a loving caring father you will enhance your child's ability to live a well adjusted life.

Improve their educational achievement and reduce any potential involvement in crime.

The more time you spend with your child, the more sensitive and responsive you become as a parent. A lot is spoken about maternal instinct but Dads are also naturally motivated to have a meaningful relationship with their child.

## PRETENDING EVERYTHING IS PERFECT

Some mothers cover up or mask their true feelings and say they are **BETTER** when asked by partners, family, friends and professionals how they are feeling. This can be about her own or others expectations, or that she doesn't want to burden anyone with the symptoms of her illness at a time when she feels she should be happy. Sometimes it is easier to **PRETEND** than try to explain how she really feels.

## GOOD DAYS AND BAD DAYS

There will be days when your partner feels more like her old self but this doesn't mean that she is fully recovered. She may still have days when she feels worse and cannot see beyond the depression. Encourage her to eat regularly and on good days encourage her to take part in physical activities. It is important not to force her if she doesn't want to or feel ready to face the world.

## LOSS OF LIBIDO

One of the symptoms of postnatal illness is a lack of sex drive. This may upset you and leave you feeling rejected but try not to take it personally. The 24 hours demands of a baby following the exhaustion of childbirth can mean she is so tired she may feel she has little or nothing left to spare for anyone else. Breastfeeding is another physically draining (sometimes painful) task so try to be patient and considerate her feelings. You can still be intimate with your partner without having penetrative sex.