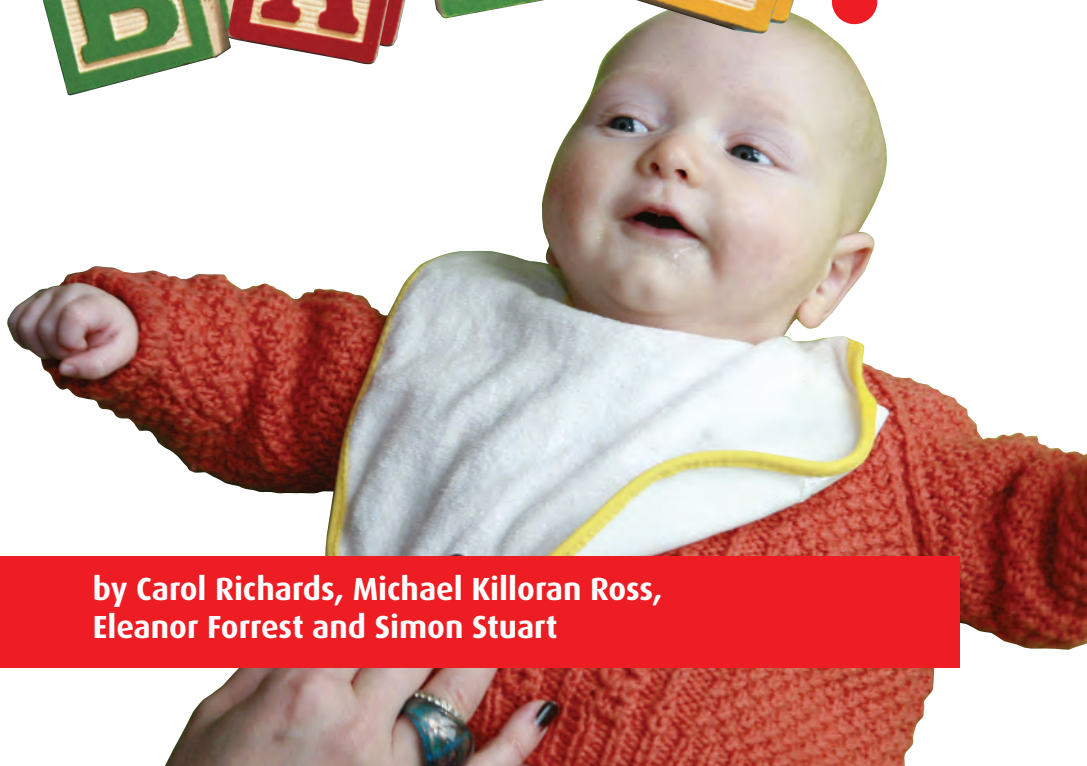




So you've just had a

B **A** **B** **Y** ?



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www.glasgowsteps.com



2 So you've just had a baby?

So you've just had a baby?

Feeling tired?

Feeling low?

Feeling like you can't cope?

Then read on ...

In Part One:

Read about why you might feel the way you do.

In Part Two:

Find out what you can do to feel better.



Part 1

steps



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a time of change

Having a baby turns things upside-down. Above all, it changes how we feel. Some of this can be down to our hormones. Some of it is simply down to who we are. Most of it is just down to one fact: having a baby is stressful.

All of this is normal. In this booklet, we'll help you understand the changes you're going through ... and what you can do.

different people, different feelings

It's easy to think there's such a thing as an "ideal mum". What we see on TV or read in the news can make us think this. But there's really not. Right from pregnancy, women do and feel all sorts of different things.

- Some mums will enjoy the changes and want to talk about them. Some mums will take a very practical approach and try to deal with things as and when they come up.
- Some mums won't like the changes. They might try to stick to the way they lived their life before. Some mums might look at having a baby as a real hassle.
- Some women will start bonding with their babies long before they're born. Many will hold, stroke and talk to their "bump".



Motherhood: some myths and facts

myths

- Mothers always have tender feelings for their babies
- Mothers should always look beautiful
- Women who stay at home are always good mothers
- Women who go to work are always neglectful mothers
- Good mothers always have time for their children
- All mothers bond with their babies straight away
- Being a mother is the ultimate in feeling feminine



facts

- No matter how much we love our babies, it's natural that things will get on top of us sometimes
- Mothers will often look tired, hassled ... and messy!
- Whether you stay at home or go to work, it doesn't need to make any difference to how good a mum you are
- All mothers need time away from their children: on their own, with their partner or with friends
- It can take time to form a bond with baby
- Being a mother is just one part of being feminine!



how you might be feeling

Feeling like you can't cope

For new mums (and dads) it can be very stressful looking after a baby and trying to do all the things you were doing before. It's no surprise that sometimes you end up feeling you just can't cope.

True-life tales: Ashna

"You just have so much to do. You wake up in the morning and before you're out of bed you're already behind with something. It's like feeling under pressure all the time. I felt wound up tight 24 hours of the day."



It's normal to think you can't cope when you're faced with something you've not done before. You want to be the best mum you can. But sometimes hormone changes, tiredness and stress can make you think you're not doing as well as you are.

Feeling blue (the baby blues)

You might have heard about "the baby blues" and be wondering what it is. Many mums describe it as a bit like a rollercoaster: their mood is always going up and down. On top of that, they often talk about ...



- Worrying about the baby
- Feeling like they can't cope
- Feeling nervous
- Feeling irritable
- Not sleeping
- Having bad dreams
- Not wanting to eat
- Feeling sad
- Feeling lonely
- Feeling much more sensitive than usual
- Being tearful

Lots and lots of mums get the baby blues. Well over half of mums go through it – in fact, doctors think it could be as many as four in every five.

The blues tend to hit three or four days after the baby is born. Mums are much more likely to cry in the first 10 days after the birth than they are eight months later. But most mums find the baby blues don't last too long. It might be a day or two. It might be a couple of weeks. But the blues do go away.

What causes the baby blues? Nobody is really sure. It might be hormone changes, soreness from stitches or breastfeeding, or even feeling let-down after all the excitement of the birth. It's likely to be a mix of all of these.

True-life tales: Marilyn

"My partner only had to look at me and I'd start crying. I don't know why. I don't think I had a reason. He wasn't doing anything wrong. I seemed to get really annoyed at him over the least wee thing, and I kept biting his head off. And when I wasn't shouting or crying, I was worrying about the baby."



Feeling tired

One of the things every new parent talks about is feeling tired. And that's mums and dads alike.

True-life tales: Gena

"You just feel tired all the time. And you know you can't do anything about it. You feel like a mouse on one of those little wheels: you keep going round in circles. It can get you down."

It's normal to feel low or irritable if you're tired all the time. And it works the other way, too: feeling stressed can also make us feel tired.

Feeling lonely

New mothers can often feel a bit lonely. This in turn can mean they start to feel less confident than they used to. Sometimes they'll say they don't know how to talk to other people any more.

True-life tales: Liz

"After my son was born, I had so much to do in the beginning that I never thought about being lonely. I didn't have time! But after a while I began to miss adult company. I missed going to work. I missed seeing people. I felt a bit isolated."



Feeling low

Everyone feels a bit down from time to time. There doesn't have to be any reason for it.

True-life tales: Louise

"I just sort of felt fed-up. I used to think, 'What's the point?' I wasn't depressed, really. I was just kind of low sometimes. Then I'd feel guilty. I'd think, 'Wait a minute, I'm supposed to be enjoying all this new-mum stuff.'"

Sometimes, of course, you might know exactly what the reason is. For new parents, it might be what we've looked at already: feeling stressed or lonely. Maybe you're missing having time to spend with your partner or your friends.

Feeling anxious about leaving baby

Most new mums get anxious about leaving their baby. This is really normal, and tends to get better week by week. But it's important to get used to leaving your baby with other people, even if it's just for a little while to start with. And it's good to get the baby used to being cared for by other people, too. After all, you can't always be there 24/7.

True-life tales: Sinead

"At first I wouldn't let my baby out of my sight. Even when I did go out, I would phone or text my mum to make sure everything was OK. But I made sure I pushed myself to go out somewhere at least once a week, and left her with my mum or with a friend. This gave me some time to do my own stuff, and my wee girl quickly learned that I would come back."



Feeling depressed (post-natal depression)

Depression is a word that people over-use. We all get unhappy. But being depressed is a different thing.

True-life tales: Jeanette

“It was weird. I didn’t notice that I was feeling so bad for a while. But I started to feel like I was stuck in some kind of tunnel, with no light at the end. I felt I was a terrible mother and that everything I did was going wrong. And I couldn’t see that things were going to get any better.”

Post-natal depression happens to a small number of mothers. It’s hard to say how many, because some won’t tell anyone what they’re going through. But it seems to be something like one in 10 mums.

There isn’t one simple cause. Hormones, things at home, money worries and feeling under stress might all play a part.



What are the signs of post-natal depression? Here are some of the main ones:

- Low mood and being tearful
- Losing interest in things and not enjoying them as much
- Sleeping too much, or not being able to sleep at all (even when the baby is sleeping)
- Eating too much, or not being able to eat at all
- Feeling tired and having no energy all the time
- Feeling worthless or guilty about things
- Finding it difficult to concentrate
- Feeling agitated ... or feeling slowed-down all the time
- Thinking life's not worth living

This is more than the baby blues. When mums have post-natal depression, this is the way they feel a lot of the time. But the good news is that depression can be dealt with. There's a special section in part two that looks at this in more detail.



Part 2

steps



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Part One should have helped you understand some of the feelings and changes you've been going through. In Part Two we're going to look at some of the things you can do to help yourself.

dealing with getting through the day

- **Make things easier for yourself.** Don't try to be supermum. It doesn't matter if the house isn't always clean and tidy! Work out what things you need during the day – like nappies and cream – and keep them in easy reach.
- **Accept support.** You can give family and friends a list of things that they can do, like shopping and washing the dishes. If you don't feel up to visitors, ask people to come back at a better time.
- **Look after yourself.** Eat regularly and drink lots of water. When baby's sleeping, try to have a rest as well.



- **Build your confidence.** Look at all the things you're doing well. Give yourself a pat on the back – and build on these things.
- **Share your problems.** Talking to other people, including other mums, can help you find new ways of dealing with things. Sometimes a mother-and-toddler group can be a good way of meeting other mums.
- **Accept yourself.** Get to know who you are as a new mum. Get to know the things you can change ... and the things you can't.

True-life tales: Sarah

"I started to feel a little better when I made sure I had at least 10 minutes every day to myself. It doesn't sound like much but it made a big difference for me. I made sure I had 10 minutes to just do nothing. I kind of stopped thinking for that time. It was great."



dealing with stress (mind & body)

- **Learn to spot stress.** Stress affects our bodies and our minds. Here are some of the signs:

Body	Mind
Sweating	Worrying all the time
Tension	Thinking the worst
Heart flutters	Being hard on ourselves
Butterflies in the tummy	Forgetfulness
Headaches	Poor concentration
Dizziness	Feeling sad
Sickness	Feeling irritable

Some people might have all of these. Some might just have one or two.

- **Learn to relax.** We all relax in different ways. You might like to listen to music, read a magazine or have a soak in the bath. Lots of people enjoy relaxation CDs. STEPS has one that can be downloaded on to your computer or MP3 player from our website.
Go to www.glasgowsteps.com/downloads/audio.php and start with the first track listed under "Anxiety" (Deep Relaxation).
- **Learn to breathe better.** When we're stressed, our breathing changes. On the next page is a very simple way of calming down when you feel uptight:



Breathing Retraining

Take a breath in and think "**1**"

Breathe out and think, "**relax**"

Take a breath in and think "**2**"

Breathe out and think, "**relax**"

Repeat up to 10 and then back down to 1

Concentrate only on breathing and on the number and "**relax**" in your mind's eye

Use slow normal breathing (10-12 breaths per minute)

Breathe in through your nose. Purse your lips and breathe out slowly through your mouth

Practise twice a day in different places



- **Keep active.** Exercise is a great stress-buster. This doesn't mean slogging it out in the gym. Walking, dancing and even gardening are all good forms of exercise. Remember that taking your baby out for a walk counts as well.
- **Learn ways to beat your worries.** Lots of new mums say they worry about all sorts of things. Is the baby too hot? Why aren't they sleeping? What if they get ill? How will I cope when I've got to go back to work? Why do other mums seem to be coping better than me? These are normal worries to have, and they usually go away with time. But there are also three things you can do to help beat them straight away:
 - **Talking back:** When you have worries like the ones above, ask yourself:
 - What would I say to a friend if she was thinking like this?
 - How likely is it that what I'm worried about is going to happen?
 - If I wasn't so worried right now, what would I tell myself? And what would I be doing?
 - What would my friends or family say about my worries?



- **Distraction:** This means focusing on what you're doing rather than what you're thinking. Pay attention to the sights, sounds and smells around you. Put on the radio, or take baby outside and make a point of noticing all the things that are going on nearby. If you're doing something you enjoy, stop and take it in. Enjoy the moment.
- **Worry time:** This means putting aside 15 minutes of the day to do all your worrying. So if you start worrying about something in the morning, tell yourself: "I'm not going to think about this now. I'll come back to it at my worry time this evening." Then, at a set time in the evening, you spend 15 minutes looking at all the things you were worried about earlier. Often you find that they don't seem as bad when you've had time to calm down and think about other things.



dealing with being you again

- **Build up gradually.** It takes time to get back to doing the things you were doing before the baby came along. Take small steps at the start, and maybe set yourself a goal for each day. For instance, if you'd like to get back into seeing friends again, your first goal might be starting with a phonecall.
- **Remember what you enjoy.** Think about what you liked doing before you had the baby. It can be good to get back into things: aerobics classes, listening to music, going to the cinema, ten-pin bowling, chatting to your friends. Remember what we said in Part One about how important it is to get used to leaving your baby with someone else while you go out. It's good for you – and for the baby.

True-life tales: Michelle

"I didn't like leaving the baby at first but my mum babysat while I went to the hairdresser's and I felt much better afterwards. I felt I was more like my old self."

- **Spend time with your partner.** It's important to make time for each other, as you can get totally caught up with the baby. Plan a night out (or a lunch if it's easier) when you can get a babysitter.
- **Going back to work.** Most mums find going back to work tough. Leaving your baby all day can be hard, even when you know they're being well-looked-after by someone else. The first step could be texting a colleague or your boss and arranging a visit to catch up with everyone. After that, you might want to think about going back part-time.



Dealing with post-natal depression

As we saw in Part One, post-natal depression is more than the baby blues. It's more than normal stress or feeling low after your baby is born.

If you're worried, have a look at the list of warning signs for post-natal depression in Part One. If you think you are depressed, you should talk about it as soon as possible to your Health Visitor or GP. They will be able to talk about different things you can do to start feeling better. This might be:

Antidepressants

Your GP may offer you antidepressants, especially if you are feeling really low. Most people will stay on antidepressants for at least six months to a year after they start taking them. If your GP has spoken to you about taking these and you want to know more, you can download a booklet about antidepressants from the STEPS website (glasgowsteps.com).

Talking therapy

Sometimes it can help to talk to someone about how you have been feeling. This might be a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a therapist or a counsellor. There are different types of talking therapies. Your GP or local Primary Care Mental Health Team can talk to you more about which one will suit you best.

Specialist teams

If a new mum is very depressed – which is not common – then specially trained teams can give support. These are usually made up of doctors, nurses, midwives, social workers and health visitors. They can help care for both you and the baby until you are feeling better.



what about dad?

Having a new baby can be stressful for dads too. If you're a new dad, you might be worried about your baby and your partner. You might worry about how to be a good dad. It's normal to have these worries. Being a parent is a skill that takes time.

New Dad Steven

"At first I thought I'd never be able to do it. The baby was so little and I was sure I'd break something or hurt him. But the more I did, the more I learned to relax and enjoy looking after my son."



There are lots of myths about dads. Things like "dads aren't as good at caring for their kids" or "dads don't like to get involved".

It's true that mums tend to do most of the caring. This might be because they have more time off work after having a baby. But most dads will enjoy spending time with the baby too.

If dads are working during the day, they can still do lots with the baby before and after work: like bathing, clothing and helping with feeds. Dads may feel they're not good at some of these things at first. As with everything, it takes time. With practice you'll get better – so make sure you get the chance to be hands-on.



What dads can do to help mums

Having a baby can be a stressful time for dads as well as mums. So dads: remember to look after yourself too. You can read about some ways to manage stress earlier in this booklet.

- Listen
- Get involved with the baby
- Help around the house
- Tell your partner she's doing a good job
- If you're worried, don't bottle things up. Share your feelings with your partner, friends or family
- Be flexible: work out a routine that's good for you, your partner and the baby

If you're really worried about your partner – or about your own feelings – then have a chat with your GP or the Health Visitor.



useful contacts

If you're a new mum or a new dad and you want to speak to someone about a problem you're having, these are some of the people who can help:

Health problems

Community midwife
Health visitor
GP

Personal/family problems

Health visitor
GP
Social worker (your GP or Health Visitor can put you in touch)

Money and benefits

Health visitor
Social worker
Citizens Advice Bureau

Housing

Social worker
Council housing department
Citizens Advice Bureau

Childcare/playgroups

Health visitor
Social worker

There's also lots of information from other places:

National Childbirth Trust

Support and advice for parents, including classes, local contacts, shops and much more.
www.nct.org.uk
0300 330 0770



Netmums

Helpful information about local services in your area – including how to meet other new mums, where the playgroups are, and even how to find a plumber!

www.netmums.com

Glasgow STEPS

Online information about how to cope with stress and other common mental-health problems. You can watch videos and hear from people who have had stress-related problems.

www.glasgowsteps.com

Breathing Space

A free and confidential phonenumber for anyone who is feeling low or worried and wants someone to talk to.

www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk

0800 83 85 87





This booklet is part of a series on common problems also available for download on www.glasgowsteps.com

**Controlling your stress
(anxiety and depression)**

**Wellbeing
(for teenagers)**

Panic Attacks

Health Anxiety

Phobias (General)

Agoraphobia

Coping with a death

Fatigue

Anger

**Alcohol and sensible
drinking**

Antidepressants

Insomnia

Relaxation

Self-esteem

Coping with trauma

Social anxiety

**Obsessive-Compulsive
Disorder**

Height Phobia

Coming Off

Antidepressants

**Five A Day To Keep You
Feeling Well**

Cannabis and its effects

Psychosis

All these booklets can be downloaded, free of charge, from www.glasgowsteps.com. Some are also available in printed form.