

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF WHEN YOUR BABY IS SICK OR IN THE HOSPITAL



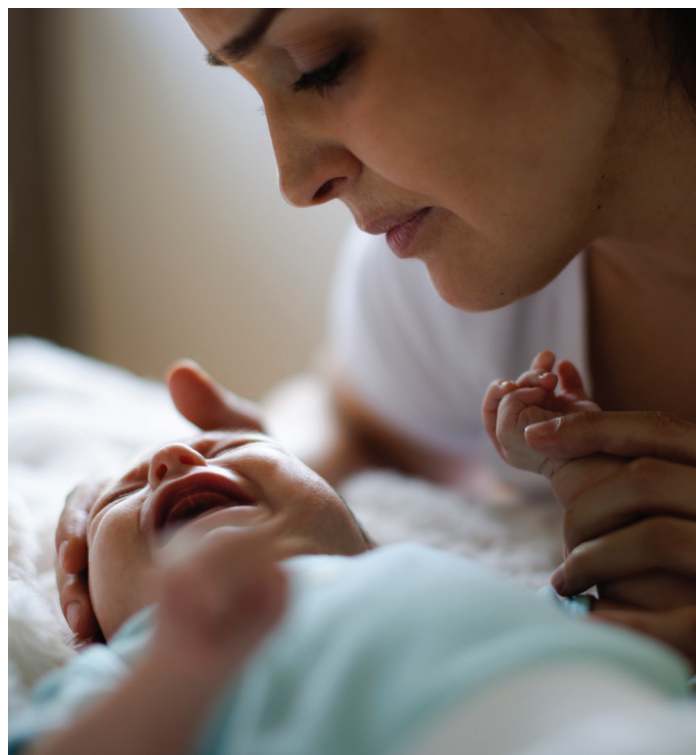
Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Having a baby or young child who is sick or in the hospital can feel really scary and emotional. You may be feeling sad, worried, or unsure. Please know that you are not alone. Our **Early Connections Team** is here to support you. We want to help you feel cared for every step of the way.

This handout has:

- Information about common feelings when your baby is sick
- Tips to help you with these feelings
- Tips to help you find a therapist for yourself
- Support groups you can join (in person or online)
- Other helpful tools and resources

We hope this information supports you during this time.



Common Feelings Parents May Have

When your baby is very sick or struggling, you may feel many strong emotions. These feelings can affect both your body and mind. They can make it harder to take care of yourself, enjoy time with your baby, or form a close bond with them. If you're feeling very sad or stressed, the information in this handout can help.

Feeling Worry and Fear

Like many parents, you may feel scared or worried when your baby is sick. You may find yourself thinking about your baby's safety very often, having a hard time sleeping, or feeling nervous all the time. It can be hard to think about anything else. This is a normal reaction.

Feeling Stressed or Overwhelmed

Scary experiences that happen to your baby can be overwhelming (a lot to deal with). This may cause you to have bad dreams, have a hard time sleeping or eating, feel nervous, feel numb, or keep thinking about hard moments over and over again.

Feeling Sad or Alone

Sadness and grief are also common feelings when your baby or young child is sick. You may feel really sad, lonely, guilty, or angry about what your child and family are going through. But sometimes, this sadness can grow into depression. If you have depression, you may feel very tired, hopeless, or stop enjoying things you used to like. You may have appetite changes (not want to eat or want to eat more) and not be able to focus. You may stay away from others because it feels like no one understands. These feelings can make it harder to ask for help.

Remember, you are not alone. There is help and support available to you. Reaching out to someone can make this time feel easier to handle.



Your Needs are Important

- **Your sleep is important.** Not getting enough sleep makes it harder to stay calm, think clearly, and feel positive. Sleep is one of the best ways to help your mind and body. Even though sleep can be tough, try to rest whenever you can. This can be naps, too.
- **Ask for help.** When you feel tired or stressed, don't try to do everything alone. Let others help with chores, meals, or baby care. If no one offers, ask them. Sometimes people want to help, but they don't know how.
- **Eat healthy foods.** Your body and brain need good food for energy. Try to have simple, healthy meals. If you can, plan ahead, buy easy-to-fix foods, or ask family and friends to bring meals.
- **Stay connected.** When you talk with other people you trust, it can make you feel less alone. It can also help to join a support group.
- **Move your body gently.** Exercise makes your brain let out "feel-good" signals. A simple walk outside can lift your mood, give you fresh air, and help calm your baby, too.

Finding a Therapist

Talking to a therapist can help if you're feeling sad, scared, or overwhelmed (like it is too much to deal with). A therapist understands what you're going through. Talk to your doctor about it. They may refer you to a therapist that they recommend.

How to Find Help if you have Medi-Cal

For mental health support (evaluations, therapy, medicines, and more) in Los Angeles County, please call the 24/7 Access Help Line at: **(800) 854-7771**

How to Find Help if you have Private Insurance

www.psychologytoday.com is a website where you can search for therapists.

Here's how:

- Type your ZIP code to find someone near you
- Click "All Filters" to pick things that may be important to you. For example:
 - Choose a specialty: Look for "Pregnancy, Prenatal, Postpartum"
 - Pick your insurance: If you want to use it
 - If you don't have insurance or do not want to use it:
 - Choose "Sliding Scale" which will connect you to a therapist who may be able to lower their fees if you can't afford to pay the full price.
 - Price: to search the cost by hour
 - Language
 - In Person or Online
- Contact them: You can message or call to ask questions or book a visit

You can also call your insurance directly to ask for a referral in your area. Make sure to let them know you want a provider who specializes in "Postpartum."



Questions to Ask a Therapist

Before you start, it's okay to ask the therapist some questions:

- Have you helped people after pregnancy?
- How do you treat anxiety or sadness?
- Have you worked with families who have had a baby in the hospital?
- Can family members join some of the sessions?
- What licenses or certifications do you have?
- Do you take my insurance?

Sometimes it takes time to find the right therapist for you. The first time you meet with them is a chance for both of you to see if this is a good fit. It's okay to try a different therapist if it doesn't feel right.

Medicine to Feel Better

Sometimes parents feel very sad, worried, or have bad dreams or memories from the past that are hard to stop thinking about. These feelings can get so strong that it's hard to come to the hospital, take care of yourself, or feel close to your baby. Some parents may even start to think their baby would be better off without them or that they don't want to keep living.

If you ever feel this way, it's very important to talk to a doctor or nurse. Medicine for depression or anxiety can help. These medicines can help you sleep better, feel calmer and hopeful, and enjoy your baby again. They can also reduce or make scary or hopeless thoughts go away.

You don't have to go through this alone. Help and treatment can make things better.

Other Helpful Websites and Phone Numbers

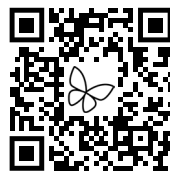
Here are more websites and phone numbers to help you find the right support:



Maternal Mental Health Now

Offers a variety of resources to help you during pregnancy and after.

Website: <https://maternalmentalhealthnow.org/parents-families/>



Postpartum Support International (PSI)

Helps people find support for depression, anxiety, and more during and after pregnancy.

Languages: Offers virtual support groups in English and Spanish

Hours: 5 a.m. — 8 p.m. PST

Phone: 1-800-944-4773 (text or call)

Website: postpartum.net

Maternal Mental Health Peer Support Line

Languages: English and Spanish | **Hours:** 9 a.m. — 5 p.m. PST

Phone: 888-823-SANA or (888-823-7262)



National Maternal Mental Health Hotline

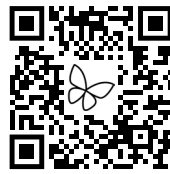
Helps connect people with local support groups for support during pregnancy and after.

Languages: English and Spanish

Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Phone: 1-833-TLC-MAMA or 800-852-6262 (text or call)

Website: [HRSA Mental & Child Health](https://hrsa.gov/mental-child-health)



UCLA Perinatal Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)

For people who need more help during or after pregnancy. Offers therapy and support.

Email: MMHResnick@mednet.ucla.edu

Phone: 310-825-4138

Website: [Perinatal Intensive Outpatient Program \(IOP\)](https://perinatalintensiveoutpatientprogram.ucla.edu)

Support for NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) parents

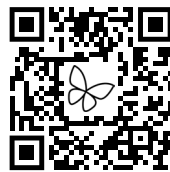


Hand to Hold

Support before, during, and after a hospital stay. (Virtual support groups offered).

Phone: 855-424-6428

Website: <https://handtohold.org/nicu-family-support/>



Mighty Little Giants

Offers support groups and care kits for NICU parents.

Email: info@MightyLittleGiants.org

Phone: 213-590-4859

Website: mightylittlegiants.org

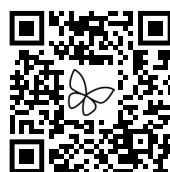


March of Dimes

Has information, tools, and help for NICU families.

Website: marchofdimes.org

[Coping with stress in the NICU](#) • [Baby blues after pregnancy](#) • [Postpartum depression](#)



National Network of NICU Psychologists

Website: [NICU Mental Health Roadmap | NICU to Home](https://www.nnicu.org/nicu-mental-health-roadmap)

Support When in Crisis

Safety (if you need police to come to your house ASAP): 911 | **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** (to talk or text): 988

LA County Department of Mental Health ACCESS (to send the mobile crisis team to you the same day): 800-854-7771

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741



STEIN TIKUN OLAM EARLY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL LOS ANGELES

4650 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90027 • CHLA.org

Scan the QR code on the left for more resources from CHLA experts.