

Reducing the mother's stress

For many women and their partners, becoming parents is an exciting time and is a life-changing event.

As with many life-changing events, parents often also experience a range of emotions in addition to joy, such as fear, apprehension and frustration.

These are very normal feelings when big changes occur, because while we are adjusting to our new circumstances, we are being stretched to cope in ways we have never had to cope before.

Emotional health in pregnancy

Just like the benefits of remaining active and looking after our physical health, emotional health and wellbeing is particularly important during pregnancy for mothers and their babies.

Emotional wellbeing of our expectant and new mothers is important because it prepares them to better cope with the major life transition into parenthood.

Strengthening relationships with family and friends and developing local community connections supports an experience of social belonging and helps promote emotional health.

Babies in-utero are exposed to all the things that their mothers experience – the sounds of their environment, the air she breathes, the food she eats, as well as the feelings she experiences.

When a mother is happy and calm, this allows her baby to grow in a happy and calm environment.

On the other hand, stress releases hormones into the body that can impact the baby's body and brain.

Complex pregnancies and preterm birth

For parents who are at risk of complications in their pregnancy, the accent of stress and worry is different from normal worry because their situation is quite extraordinary.



Dr Catherine Campbell

**Clinical Psychologist,
Western Australian Preterm Birth
Prevention Initiative**

In addition to experiencing worry about the safety of their pregnancy and unborn baby, women may carry memories of previous trauma or loss associated with delivering a preterm or sick baby.

Feelings of worry, sadness and loss can be difficult to manage alongside the development of a woman's very special relationship with her unborn baby and many women describe a fear of bonding with their baby too soon or until important anniversary dates pass.

It is important women in this situation understand this sort of stress and worry is common.

Giving birth to a preterm or sick baby is a crisis for most parents and it's a crisis for their baby too. There are many stressful complications that require rapid decision-making in the context of fear and fatigue.

Partners may feel torn between staying to support their partner and travelling with the baby to the intensive care unit and mothers' first memories of their baby may become characterised by separation.



Dr Felice Watt

**Consultant Psychiatrist, Director of Psychiatry,
Womens Health Clinical Care Unit,
Women and Newborn Health Service**

Feelings of displacement, helplessness and loss of control are very common as parents adjust to their new situation in the intensive care environment.

Parents are required to quickly come to terms with and adjust their expectations for their child in the face of threat and uncertainty and learn to co-parent with hospital teams.

Often women describe mourning the loss of their pregnancy and some women can find it difficult to embrace their child in the incubator for a short while.

For parents from different cultures, the impact of various medical treatments can be traumatic, particularly if they are confronted with options that compromise other firmly held beliefs.

A number of factors can increase a woman's risk of finding this extraordinary experience very stressful.

These include having current or previous mental health difficulties, other complicated pregnancies, loss and grief, a tendency to worry, conflict in important relationships or other social hardship.

Testing your risk of preterm birth.

The quantitative Fetal Fibronectin test helps your doctor assess your risk of preterm birth if you have symptoms or have risk factors such as a previous preterm birth.¹

Ask your doctor if the test is right for you.

RapidfFN
10Q System

Doctor enquiries: australia@hologic.com



HOLOGIC
The Science of Sure

What can help?

Feeling overwhelmed with emotions is not uncommon and very understandable at some stage during pregnancy, or the post-birth period, particularly when there are complications.

Unfortunately, it is still the case that many people feel they have to struggle on, because they feel that admitting that they are not coping is shameful.

Nevertheless, talking about one's feelings to one's partner or trusted friend or family member and accepting support can be helpful.

In addition, many women benefit from simple things, like being kind to themselves, resting when possible, eating well and doing some gentle exercise.

Psychological support for women who encounter these stressful circumstances often involves simply naming and validating the complex array of emotions that make up their

grief and traumatic stress, as they find ways to reconnect with their 'invisible' rules for coping that have carried them through their 'pre-existing' lives.

Access to the family's support networks and accurate information is important.

Women and their families experiencing significant stress or emotional difficulties can receive help from health professionals including their general practitioner, child health nurse, community midwife, obstetrician, private psychologist, psychiatrist or counsellor.

For more information about mental health in pregnancy go to www.beyondblue.org.au or www.cope.org.au.

If you or someone you care about is in crisis call the mental health emergency response line 1300 555 788 (metro) 1800 552 002 (rural) or lifeline 131 114.

1. Rapid fFN 10Q Cassette Package Insert, AW-09189-001-002-02, Marlborough MA, Hologic Inc. 2015.

Hologic cannot provide clinical advice. Please consult your doctor if you experience any signs or symptoms of preterm labour. Your doctor will advise if the Rapid fFN test is suitable for you. The Rapid fFN test can only be performed by a medical professional. ADS-01507-AUS-EN ©2016 Hologic, Inc. 02/16. All rights reserved. Hologic, The Science of Sure, Rapid fFN and associated logos are trademarks or registered trademarks of Hologic, Inc., and/or its subsidiaries in the United States and/or other countries. Hologic (Australia) Pty Ltd, Level 4, 2-4 Lyon Park Rd, Macquarie Park NSW 2113. Tel. +61 2 9888 8000. ABN 95 079 821 275.