



Motherhood is different for everyone.

By Southeast Health Group

Some find it to be a really happy time. Others struggle with all of the changes it brings. Whatever your situation, here are some common questions women ask during pregnancy and after the birth of a child.

How do I manage the stress of all of these changes?

After you give birth, it is common to feel tired and sore. This usually goes away after the first three months. If you had a C-section, your body can change in ways you didn't expect, requiring longer healing and extra doctor visits. Breastfeeding can cause stress, if your baby doesn't latch on easily, or if you don't have enough milk supply. Relationships can become stressful, as you deal with lack of sleep or money problems. Here are a few things you can do when you feel new mom stress:

- Reach out to someone who knows how to reassure you
- Find support from other mothers who can trade babysitting, so you have some time to yourself
- Try journaling, meditation, exercise, or listen to music
- Remember to eat regular meals and try to sleep when the baby sleeps
- Use social media to find inspiration and online support groups
- If you feel completely overwhelmed, call for professional help at 800-511-5446

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I don't feel close to my newborn. Is this normal?

Some new mothers feel “instant love” for their newborn. Other mothers take time to develop those feelings. The good news is that your body produces a natural hormone

called “oxytocin” that helps you bond. About 30% of mothers don't immediately fall in love with their babies, but they do attach in the first few months. Here's what you can do to speed up the bonding process:

- Give your baby skin-to-skin contact
- Hold the baby often, and don't worry about “spoiling”
- When the baby cries for food or a wet diaper, pick it up quickly
- Hold your baby while feeding and make eye contact
- Smile at your baby and use “baby talk”

What do I do if I feel sad or scared after giving birth?

You are not alone. This happens to over 3 million mothers in the U.S. each year. It can happen because of changes in your hormones or stress levels. It's possible your mother or grandmother felt that way, too. It is more common after the birth of the first child. This type of depression is treatable with counseling and medication. If you begin to have mood swings, crying spells, anxiety or trouble sleeping, call for help. Crisis services are available 24 hours a day. Call 800-511-5446.

I'm not sure if breast feeding is for me... If you are having trouble breast feeding, it's okay to ask for help. Call the Southeast Colorado Nurse Family Partnership at 719-336-8721 to ask about free home visits. Their trained nurses are available to answer all of your questions about caring for your child.

What if I want to use alcohol or drugs while I'm pregnant or nursing?

Drinking wine, beer or liquor while pregnant can lead to birth defects. Heavy use can lead to a disease called fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). Babies exposed to alcohol before they are born can have problems



with their heart, kidney, and bones. They can have learning disabilities and low IQ. They may have trouble with memory, coordination, and attention. They can become hyperactive, and have problems with sleep and suckling as an infant. These problems tend to get worse as the child grows up. There is no “safe” amount of alcohol that pregnant women can drink. And there is no time during pregnancy when it's safer to drink alcohol.

Smoking marijuana and using other drugs during pregnancy can also be dangerous. It can cause miscarriage, premature birth, or keep the baby from gaining weight. It can also cause long-term health problems for the child. A baby can be born dependent on the drug and go through painful withdrawals.

It is best to avoid alcohol and drugs if you are breastfeeding. One standard drink per day may not be harmful to the infant, especially if you wait at least two hours before nursing. Exposing your child to more than one standard drink through breast milk could hurt its development, growth, and sleep patterns. It might also make it harder for you to safely care for your child.

If you would like help with your drug or alcohol use, call Southeast Health Group at 800-511-5446.