



COPING WITH COVID



Perinatal support newsletter

You're not in this alone, we're in this together and we're here to help



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@SWLSTGperinata

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Welcome to the January Issue of our Coping with COVID-19 Perinatal Newsletter. This month we will be talking about our wellbeing during these grey winter months and things we can do to help us get motivated. We will also be discussing New Year's resolutions, an update on the spread of Omicron, a winter recipe, pregnancy traditions in Scandinavia and more. We wish you a happy and healthy start to the new year!

New Year's Resolutions

New Year's resolutions are a popular concept, and many people use this time to make changes in life to try and be a better person but don't put too much pressure on yourself. Just because it's a new year, doesn't mean that it has to be a whole new you. Whether you have 1 resolution or 10 resolutions, make sure that they have (and will have) a positive impact on your life – your mental health should be your priority. Below are a few ideas for your resolutions and although you should try your best to stick to them, just remember that if you don't, it's absolutely ok.



Wellbeing in the Winter Months

January Blues

After the excitement and bustle of the Christmas season, it is completely natural to feel a little down at this time of the year.

The factors that may cause a decline in mood in January include:

- ❖ Reduced daylight hours
- ❖ Seasonal Affective Disorder
- ❖ Financial worries following Christmas
- ❖ A challenging holiday period due to loss, loneliness or estrangement
- ❖ Returning to work

Here are Five tips to beat the January Blues:

1. Accept that this is normal

There are biological reasons why many people feel low and lack energy during January. There is nothing 'wrong' with having these feelings, and many people feel exactly the same as you.

2. Make the most of the daylight

Being outdoors in the sunlight can make you feel better and give you more energy. This is because exposure to natural light increases the levels of serotonin in the brain, which is associated with improved mood. The sunlight can make you feel better and help regulate your sleep cycles.

3. Exercise

It might be cold outside, but one of the best ways to improve how you feel is to get some exercise. A brisk walk with friends can be a great way to get some fresh air and release endorphins, making you feel better.

4. Eat properly

When feeling down, you're more likely to comfort eat. It's normal for us to want more fatty and heavy food during the cold months of winter. Having a varied, balanced diet can work wonders to improve your mood. Balance your craving for carbohydrates, such as pasta and potatoes, with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. And take extra vitamin D – the 'sunshine vitamin'.

Working from Home

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has meant big life changes for us all, including adjusting to new ways of working. While some of us have returned to our normal workplace, many are still working from home or going through a phased return.

Set and stick to a routine



- Follow your normal sleep and work patterns if you can and stay consistent. Try scheduling in your 'commute time' and spend it exercising, reading. Most importantly, when your workday stops, stop working.

Make a dedicated workspace



- Find a quiet space away from distractions and designate an area for work. Make sure you are comfortable – try using things like cushions to support you in your chair

Give yourself a break



- Making time for breaks is important. Try to take regular lunch and screen breaks. Set a time to go for a walk for some fresh air, even just 5-10 minutes.

Stay connected



- Working from home can sometimes make you feel more isolated. Make time to socialise virtually - schedule video calls instead of emailing, digital coffee breaks etc.

Be kind to yourself



- Be kind to yourself and acknowledge that you might not be as productive as you usually would be. Be realistic about what you can achieve and relax when your work is done.

For more advice on how to look after your own mental health and supporting colleagues while working from home, [visit Mental Health at Work](#).

Pregnancy and Motherhood in Scandinavia



Scandinavian countries are ranked some of the happiest countries in the world and are known to be among the best to raise children thanks to the huge benefits and support on offer to parents, including generous parental leave and pay that encourages shared childcare. In addition, they have supportive communities and midwives lead the pre, during and post-birth process resulting in good birthing outcomes. Here are some of the birthing traditions in a few Scandinavian countries.

Finland: *"Giving birth is a family affair that emphasizes on mother and baby's wellbeing"*

- According to the law, everyone must have a last name and 1–4 first names, which is often kept a secret until the baptism.
- When a child is born, a native language must be registered for them which may impact later choice of schools.
- Finland introduced baby boxes in 1938 in a bid to tackle a declining birth rate and high infant mortality and they are still used to this day by most parents. They provide a safe place for baby to sleep and lots of other baby useful bits.
- Parents receive 164 days leave each and can only swap 69 days. Single parents gets double.



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Sweden: *"Safest place in world to become a mother"*

- 99% of births take place in hospital under the care midwives, with the least intervention necessary.
- Post natal care is focussed both on Mum and baby.
- It is said to be bad luck to bring any flowers home from hospital.
- Parents receive 480 days leave, 90 specifically for men with a bonus if split evenly to be taken during first 12 years. Childcare max \$150 /day.
- Parents commonly put their babies down for a nap outdoors because babies may get better sleep while being exposed to fresh air, even when it is freezing cold.
- Gender neutral pre-schools.

Denmark: *"Giving birth is a natural event, not a medical condition"*

- Giving birth is considered a natural event, not a medical condition, which means there are no doctors present unless the midwife sees it necessary, in case of complications
- Mothers-to-be can chose to give birth either in a public hospital or at home, with no private maternity clinics.
- Once your child is born you are encouraged to care for the baby yourself.
- 4 weeks paid leave before birth and 12 weeks after, and then parents can split the remaining 32 weeks.
- Government puts you in parent group for birth preparation classes which most expecting fathers attend too.
- Parents can only choose a name from a list of 7,000 names with a boy and girl list.



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Updates (Covid-19/what's going on in the month)

The government has announced that the measures put in place under plan B in England will be lifted. You should continue to follow safer behaviours to protect yourself and others:

- [Get vaccinated](#) and get your [booster dose](#)
- Wear a face covering in most indoor public places and on public transport
- Let fresh air in if you meet indoors. Meeting outdoors is safer
- [Get tested](#) and self-isolate if required

Plan B: upcoming changes

The government has announced that the measures put in place under [Plan B](#) in England will be lifted.

This means:

- Workers are no longer asked to work from home if they can. People should talk to their employers to agree arrangements to return to the workplace.
- From 27 January, there is no longer a legal requirement to wear a face covering. People are still advised to wear one in crowded and indoor spaces where they may come into contact with people they do not normally meet.
- From 27 January, venues and events are no longer required by law to check visitors' NHS COVID Pass. They can still choose to use the NHS COVID Pass on a voluntary basis.

Chicken Noodle Soup



A simple, warming noodle soup to celebrate the forthcoming of Chinese New Year

Ingredients – serves 4

- 2 chicken thighs, skinned, boned, cut into thin strips
 - 1 tbsp olive oil
 - 1 onion, peeled and diced
 - 6 spring onions, shredded
 - Small knob of fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped
 - 1 red chili, de-seeded and cut into very thin strips
 - 2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
 - 1 stalk lemongrass, outer leaves removed and finely chopped
 - 1 pak choi, white and green parts separated and shredded
 - Pinch of ground allspice
 - Splash of soy sauce
 - 1 litre/ 1 ¾ pints hot chicken stock
 - 150g/ 5oz noodles
 - Salt and ground black pepper
- To serve:**
- 2 tbsps Chopped fresh coriander

Method

1. Heat a splash of oil in a pan over medium heat and fry the onions, spring onions, chilli, garlic, ginger and the white shredded parts of the pak choi together with a good pinch of salt and ground black pepper for 3-4 minutes. Stir in slices chicken and allspice powder and continue to fry for a further minute or two.
2. Pour in the hot stock, add the lemongrass and the soy sauce and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat, add the egg noodles and the remaining green parts of the pak choi and simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Ladle the soup into warmed serving bowls and sprinkle over the chopped fresh coriander and serve immediately.

Yoga and Wellbeing

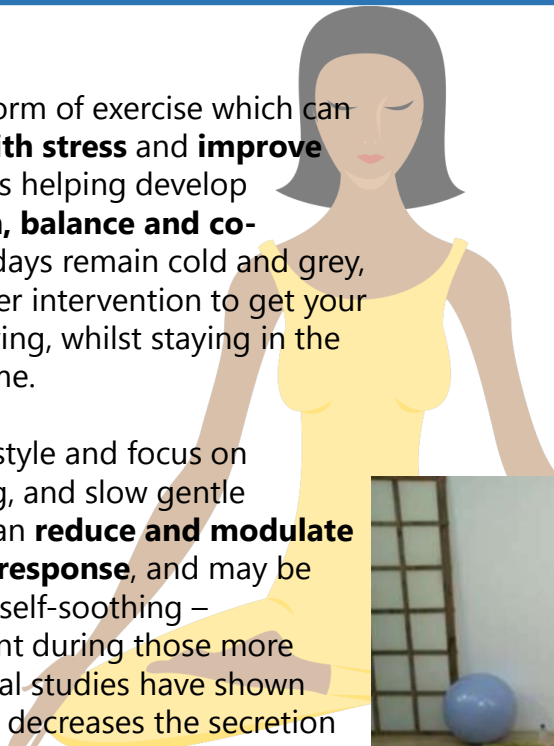
Yoga is an ancient form of exercise which can help you to **cope with stress** and **improve wellbeing**, as well as helping develop **flexibility, strength, balance and co-ordination**. As the days remain cold and grey, yoga can be an easier intervention to get your body and mind flowing, whilst staying in the comfort of your home.

With its meditative style and focus on relaxation, breathing, and slow gentle movements, yoga can **reduce and modulate your body's stress response**, and may be helpful as a form of self-soothing – particularly important during those more stressful days. Several studies have shown that practising yoga decreases the secretion of cortisol, more commonly known as 'the stress hormone', which can in turn boost levels of serotonin – the neurotransmitter associated with **feelings of happiness and wellbeing**.

If you are **pregnant** or have **recently given birth**, gentle exercise can be helpful. In this 45-minute video designed for beginners, instructor Hester will help you to tone, stretch and relax. You will need 3 pillows or cushions, a mat to lie on, and a blanket or large towel.

These fitness videos have been created by InstructorLive and range from 10 to 45 minutes. Please note, these videos are recorded sessions of previously live webcasts.

[Prenatal and postnatal yoga video - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)



Some helpful links for perinatal mental health support or when in crisis

ICope: Offer free, confidential help and therapy for problems such as stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia. Types of things they offer are guided self-help, digital therapy, community links, workshops, books on prescription, CBT, support groups, counselling, mindfulness, interpersonal therapy, brief dynamic interpersonal therapy, behavioural couples therapy and employment support.

<https://www.icope.nhs.uk/kingston/>

Hestia's (in Tooting) and Sunshine (in Kingston) Recovery Café: The Sunshine Recovery Café is open to adult residents of South West London (18+) who perceive themselves, or are at risk of moving into mental health crisis. The café offers a welcoming, safe, friendly and non-stigmatising environment. We offer a variety of emotional support, resilience building, recreation and leisure activities, peer-led support, signposting to partner agencies, risk assessment, and opportunities including complementary therapies, healthy eating sessions, Yoga, separate women and men's peer support groups, art therapy, Goals for the Week group and many others. <http://www.sunshinerecoverycafe.org>

Peanut: Peanut is a social networking app to meet, chat and learn from like-minded women.

<https://www.peanut-app.io>

Sleepio: Sleepio is a digital CBT program that some people have found very helpful for improving their sleep: <https://www.sleepio.com/work/nhs/>

The Breathing App guides you gently into resonance breathing, which is a breathing rate of 5-7 breaths per minute (instead of our usual 15-18)

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/the-breathing-app/id1285982210>

Headspace- A guided meditation app with the goal of mindfulness

<https://www.headspace.com>

If you find yourself in a mental health crisis and you do not know who to turn to, South West London and St George's has a Mental Health Support Line for all of their clients which can advise and signpost you towards vital support. Their number is: **0800 028 8000**

Other Crisis Helplines:



text SHOUT to 85258. A free confidential 24hr text support service.



call 116 123. Open 24hrs a day, 365 days a year

If you have any feedback or need any further help with any of the information we have provided in this newsletter or wish to unsubscribe, please contact us.

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Telephone: 0203 513 6577

Twitter: @SWLSTGperinatal

Feedback link about the service (POEM)

<https://feedback.swlstg.nhs.uk>



**South West London and
St George's Mental Health**

NHS Trust