



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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@ SWLSTGperinatal

April 2022

Welcome to the April Issue of our Coping with COVID-19 Perinatal Newsletter. This month we will be sharing information around ASD in support of World Autism Awareness Month. We discuss Pregnancy sickness and Hyperemesis and how to manage it with appropriate support. We also share information about Infant massage, Pregnancy traditions in Poland and a child-friendly Easter recipe. Wishing you all a lovely Easter and Ramadan Kareem!

World Autism Awareness Month

Throughout the month, there is a focus on sharing stories and providing opportunities to increase understanding and acceptance of people with autism, fostering worldwide support. Invite your friends to join the [Kindness Campaign](#) and encourage acceptance, understanding and inclusion with daily acts of kindness in your community.

To receive a diagnosis of ASD, you need to meet criteria in these areas:

1. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction

- Social emotional reciprocity
- Nonverbal communication
- Making, maintaining & understanding relationships

2. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities

- Repetitive movements
- Insistence on sameness
- Routines or rituals
- Interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus

Those with ASD can struggle with Communication

There is a wide variation in extent of ability (which is why it is called a Spectrum) but some may experience difficulties with both verbal and nonverbal communication:

Verbal:

- Frequent use of stereotypical phrases
- Monotonous tone
- Repetitive speech
- Excessive information on topics of own interest

Non-Verbal:

- Facial expressions
- Body posture
- Use of gesture

Other criteria may include:

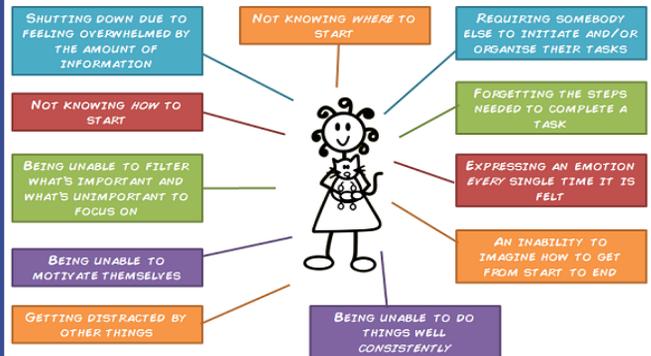
Social Interaction:

- Not paying attention to others
- Appearing distant and uninterested
- Being alone and withdrawn
- Difficulty interpreting social cues
- Difficulty forming and maintaining friendships

Restrictive Behaviours or Interests:

- People with autism often have restricted and rigid behaviours. This is related to difficulties thinking flexibly in many situations.
- Repetitive movements can be calming.

HOW MIGHT POOR 'EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING' PRESENT?



Women are less likely to be diagnosed as the criteria for diagnosis has traditionally been heavily leaning toward a male representation of ASD - But as a woman, or perhaps when you were a little girl - You may well have used 'camouflaging' or 'masking' this is where you may consciously and subconsciously copy the females around you, what they laugh at, how they act - this act of 'masking' is exhausting and can cause burn out for girls and young women in education & throughout life.

- ❖ Females may have a higher motivation than males to initiate social relationships.
- ❖ Females may be better able to initiate reciprocal relationships.
- ❖ Females may still have 'special interests', but these may appear less unusual than those in males.

For more information, see National Autistic Society <https://www.autism.org.uk/> or Autism Speaks [World Autism Month](#) | [Autism Speaks](#)

Hyperemesis

What is Hyperemesis?

Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy is a very common symptom especially in the first 12-14 weeks. Some women 1-3% will have more severe nausea and vomiting which can persist throughout pregnancy making life very difficult this is called **Hyperemesis gravidarum**.

Sometimes the symptoms are related to hormone levels so if you are having problems see your GP who will refer you to your local early pregnancy unit for a scan and for support from doctors who regularly look after women with this condition. Some women will need to take a variety of anti-sickness medication as well as needing re hydration sometimes with fluid from a drip.

What are the causes?

Definite causes of hyperemesis are unknown. There may, however, be links to the normal hormonal changes in pregnancy. Emotional factors and a family history may also have a role in the development of hyperemesis gravidarum. Hyperemesis gravidarum may happen again in future pregnancies, although this is not a fixed rule.

Problems that can occur as a result of severe nausea and vomiting include vitamin deficiencies, malnutrition and weight loss, severe dehydration and psychological problems as a result of having to cope with constant nausea.

What are the signs & symptoms?



Prolonged and severe nausea and vomiting (more than 3-4 times a day)



Inability to keep down food or water



Excessive tiredness and dizziness (or fainting)



Passing more concentrated and lower volume urine than usual



Inability to swallow saliva



Skin becoming pale and dry

If you are concerned about your symptoms, please contact your allocated clinician

How can severe nausea and vomiting be treated?

- Fluid replacement to correct dehydration
- Electrolytes such as potassium and sodium can also be replaced by this method. Anti-sickness medication

What is the aim of treatment for Hyperemesis Gravidarum?

- To correct dehydration.
- To break the cycle of vomiting that leads to dehydration.
- To ensure there is no other medical problem that could be causing the nausea and vomiting.

How to cope with Hyperemesis

Pregnancy Sickness Support

They have lots of information and support for you to access on here, whether it's [self help techniques](#) or more information about [treatments](#) for [hyperemesis gravidarum](#).

Pregnancy Sickness Support's [Online Support Forum](#) is full of women who have been through pregnancy sickness and hyperemesis in its various severities and can offer a wealth of information on coping strategies and tips for surviving; please join to access instant support and information from women who 'know'.

They also provide a [Peer Support Network](#) – a volunteer network made up of people from all around the UK who have suffered hyperemesis gravidarum, or severe pregnancy sickness themselves. After speaking to a member of their team, you can be matched with a volunteer who will support you via text, email or phone.

Some women with nausea and vomiting of pregnancy will be able to manage their symptoms themselves. You should:

- **Eat small amounts often** – meals that are high in carbohydrate and low in fat, such as potato, rice and pasta, are easier to tolerate; try plain biscuits or crackers
- **Avoid any foods or smells that trigger symptoms**
- **Complementary therapies** such as acupuncture or acupressure may also be helpful.

If your symptoms do not settle or if they prevent you doing your day-to-day activities, see your GP, who will prescribe anti-sickness medication. This is safe to take in pregnancy.

Sign up for pregnancy emails

Sign up for [Start4Life's weekly emails](#) for expert advice, videos and tips on pregnancy, birth and beyond.

Infant Massage Group

Infant Massage is when a parent or primary carer provides loving stokes or holds their baby.

- Using a non-fragranced vegetable oil soothing holds and stokes are given on each area of the body following a sequence of stokes.
- Infant massage is baby led and we never wake babies up or massage crying babies.
- This group runs for 5 consecutive weeks and sessions last one hour

Baby massage is about mothers getting to know their baby by gentle touch which enables them to start reading their cues, likes and dislikes. The massage group is a structured group that involves a combination of massage, theory and group discussions

Infant massage has benefits for both parents and babies and some of the benefits may include;

- Babies might sleep deeper and for longer
- Strengthen parent-baby communication
- Develop muscle tone and co-ordination
- Quality time with baby
- Might relieve wind and constipation
- Get to know their babies e.g what stokes babies like and dislike
- Babies feeling respected
- Feeling secure by providing nurturing touch
- Group sessions enable parent's meet one another

[For more information discuss with your clinician or health visitor](#)

“ This course provided a wonderful opportunity to bond with my baby and connect with other mums. This support has improved my mental health and widened my support network “ (LM)

“ I highly recommend the baby massage and they are really lovely “ (J S-F)



Traditions and Practices around Pregnancy and Childbirth in Poland



During pregnancy

- Seeing a stork mid-flight and calling out to it is a symbol of good luck. It is a prediction that the women will become pregnant shortly.
- Belief that Pregnant women should be protected from bad news.
- Eating a healthy diet is in important for growing baby.
- Belief that certain activities such as lifting, heavy exercise or skipping steps when going downstairs will result in harm to baby.
- You cannot frighten the expectant mother because the baby may be born with a birthmark.
- A way to protect one's baby against the influence or potential harm intended by witches "evil eye" is by the use of red, silky ribbons.
- Outside the home, where dangers grow, a ribbon is also tied to the stroller, usually to the handle, with a flowery knot. This functions as a sort of shield to ensure the baby's safety when out and about discovering the world.
- What is not customary in Poland is to give gifts for the baby before the baby is born. It's supposed to bring bad luck. There are also No baby showers.

After giving birth

- Traditional practice is 15 days of bed rest.
- Grandparents sometimes stay in the early postnatal period to provide support and guidance. Elders are considered wise, and any advice about child-rearing is accepted – sometimes more than professional advice – this can cause conflict.
- Breastfeeding is very important, supported and encouraged in Poland.
- It is important for a mother to be at "peace" when breastfeeding.
- To help milk supply, women are encouraged to drink warm milk with hot tea.
- A new baby is not usually taken out in public for the first month and visitors to the home are discouraged.
- When you greet the baby for the first time, you stuff money down the front of its onesie. It is called "polish money" and they are to keep it and not to spend it.
- Family celebrations of the birth of a baby usually take place when a baby is baptised.

1st Birthday Polish Tradition

On the baby's 1st Birthday, there is a tradition of laying out a shot glass, silver coin, and rosary in front of a baby. Whichever one the child picks, will determine what they will be like in the future.

- **Shot Glass:** Out-going (Great socialiser, people-oriented)
- **Coin:** Prosperous (Ambitious and driven, business-oriented)
- **Rosary:** Religious (Spiritual, awareness-oriented)



Ramadan Kareem

Islamic law gives permission for pregnant and breastfeeding women to opt out of fasting if she fears that it will harm her health or the health of her baby. Make sure you discuss fasting with your midwife or GP if you consider taking part.

- ❑ **Fasting should be discussed with your midwife or GP** so that you can have a health check and get their advice on whether fasting is likely to harm you or your baby's health. The time of year Ramadan falls and work commitments may also affect your decision.
- ❑ **To reduce the risk of dehydration**, stay in the shade, do not over-exert yourself, and try to drink plenty of fluids once you have broken your fast and at 'suhoor'. Remember that during pregnancy, the amount of fluid you need may increase by an extra 1-2 glasses a day. Furthermore, including foods which have a high-water content such as fruits, vegetables, soups, stews and porridge in your 'suhoor' and 'iftar' meals may also help to keep you hydrated. It is advised to avoid consuming too many salty foods, especially first thing in the morning, as this may make you feel even more thirsty.
- ❑ **Make sure you are taking your supplements** (such as folic acid and vitamin D) and eating a healthy, balanced diet during Ramadan so that you are getting all the nutrients you and your baby need. Also try to eat foods which release energy slowly such as wholewheat pasta, wholemeal bread, oat- and bran-based cereals, beans and unsalted nuts, especially at suhoor.

[Ramadan and pregnancy - British Nutrition Foundation](#)

Easter Chocolate Nests

These easy chocolate nests are the perfect Easter treat. They're simple enough for kids to get involved and they need just three ingredients

Ingredients

- ❖ 200g milk chocolate, broken into pieces
- ❖ 2x 100g bags mini chocolate eggs
- ❖ 85g shredded wheat, crushed
- ❖ Cupcake cases



Method

1. Melt the chocolate in a small bowl placed over a pan of simmering water.
2. Pour the chocolate over the shredded wheat and stir well to combine
3. Spoon the chocolate shredded wheat into 12 cupcake cases and press the back of a teaspoon in the center to create a nest shape
4. Place a few mini eggs on top of each nest. Chill in the fridge for 2 hours until set

Survey Responses Needed!

To help us review the quality of the service the team provides, please complete the form below for **Partners and Families**, and it will be submitted to the Perinatal Quality Network project team. The whole questionnaire should take **less than 30 minutes** to complete.

Your answers will be used to help the team to improve the service. If your partner/family member has been discharged from the service, please answer as if they were still receiving treatment.

Your answers will be completely **anonymous** and will not affect the care your partner/family member receives, however, if there is something that makes us concerned about your welfare, or the welfare of others, then we may need to share this information with others.

[PQN Partner and Family Questionnaire 2020-22](#)

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

Pregnancy Support Sickness – If you think you are suffering from HG please call us for support on: [024 7638 2020](tel:02476382020) or our live web chat on [Get Help \(pregnancysicknesssupport.org.uk\)](http://pregnancysicknesssupport.org.uk) Monday-Friday 9-5pm

The Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA) is a coalition of UK organisations committed to improving the mental health and wellbeing of women and their children in pregnancy and the first postnatal year. Their web site is: <http://maternalmentalhealthalliance.org.uk/>

Mind is a national charity supporting all mental health issues. They can provide help in a crisis and give further advice about help local to you. - <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

Mush Mums: Mush is an app where mothers can find friends who live nearby with kids the same age, arrange meetups, get advice from parenting experts and fellow mums on the topics keeping them awake at night and join chat groups based on everything from their due date to their love of reality TV <https://letsmush.com/the-app/>

Bumps: This website provides reliable, evidence-based, and accurate information about use of medicines in pregnancy, in the form of freely available patient information leaflets called 'Bumps' (**B**est **U**se of **M**edicines in **P**regnancy'). <https://www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/>

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.

Perinatal Office

Telephone: 0203 513 6577

Twitter: @SWLSTGperinatal

[Feedback link about the service \(POEM\)](https://feedback.swlstg.nhs.uk)

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South West London and
St George's Mental Health

NHS Trust