

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Recovering together after a natural disaster

Supporting families in pregnancy and early parenthood

Disasters affect people in different ways. Each family member may react differently to the same event. These reactions can be severe, and are usually worst during or straight after the disaster. In most cases, reactions fade over time.



Common reactions to disasters include:

- feeling numb and detached, or overwhelmed
- feeling tearful, sad or guilty
- feeling anxious or irritable
- feeling jumpy, restless and unable to focus
- feeling unable to plan ahead
- changes in sleep or appetite
- troubling memories or bad dreams
- constant questioning and distressed thoughts
- 'reliving' the event.

Things you can do to recover:

- have reasonable expectations
- break tasks down into small, manageable steps
- take time to relax by doing something you enjoy
- do something fun with your baby
- try to get enough sleep or rest
- communicate and connect with others
- think about your baby's needs
- look towards the future
- seek help if necessary.

Looking after yourself helps you look after your baby

Always seek professional help, if you or a family member experiences any of the following:

- the above symptoms continue for longer than one month and affect your day-to-day functioning
- feelings of hopelessness or lack of interest in the future
- avoiding things that bring back memories of what happened
- being fearful, nervous or panicky (racing heart, startling easily, dizziness, shortness of breath)
- lack of energy and ongoing tiredness or numbness
- lack of enjoyment from things that you usually enjoy
- having trouble relating to and caring for your baby
- feeling guilty
- wanting to harm yourself or your baby, or thinking about ending your life.



Where to get help

Telephone and support services

General

- Your local doctor (General Practitioner)
- Lifeline (24 hrs) **13 11 14**
- 13 Health **13 43 25 84**
- beyondblue info line **1300 22 4636**
- Relationships Australia **1300 364 277**

Children

- Local Child and Youth Mental Health Service (Queensland Health)
childrens.health.qld.gov.au/mental-health-services
- Parent Line (8am – 10pm daily)
1300 30 1300

Adults

- PANDA (Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia) **1300 726 306**
- Women's Health Queensland Wide Inc.
(07) 3216 0376
(outside Brisbane) **1800 017 676**
- Pregnancy, Birth and Baby Helpline
(24 hrs) **1800 88 2436**
- Mensline Australia (24 hrs)
1300 789 978



Online resources

- Information about natural disaster recovery **childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery**
- Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia **panda.org.au**
- Information on depression and anxiety **beyondblue.org.au**
- Information on depression and anxiety **blackdoginstitute.org.au**
- Information about mental health and wellbeing **ontrack.org.au**
- Information about baby and toddler behaviour **zerotothree.org**
- Information about mothers and babies **mothersmatter.co.nz**
- Australian parenting website **raisingchildren.net.au**



Developed by the Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (QCPIMH), Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service, with the support of the National Perinatal Depression Initiative.
© Queensland Government February 2017

Contact us

 31 Robinson Road | Nundah | QLD 4012  07 3266 3100

 PIMH@health.qld.gov.au  www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/qcpimh