

# Perinatal mental health

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Perinatal mental health refers to the emotional and psychological wellbeing of a parent around the time of conception, through to 12 months after a baby is born (the perinatal period)<sup>1</sup>.

During the perinatal period, up to one in seven mothers and around one in ten fathers experience depression. It is also common for parents to experience anxiety - either on its own or co-occurring with depression<sup>2</sup>.

A 2010 survey found that the majority of mothers suffering from perinatal depression sought treatment from their general practitioner (GP)<sup>3</sup>.

Evidence indicates that maternal perinatal mental health, particularly among women experiencing disadvantage, impacts a child's emotional and behavioural development, and mental health inequalities widen as children commence school<sup>4</sup>.

## WAPHA's role

WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) is responsible for planning, guiding and directing investment towards primary health

services (including mental health services) across Western Australia, on behalf of the Australian Government.

WAPHA's role is to simplify and increase access to primary healthcare. WAPHA works with local communities and service providers to support and develop services that address identified needs.

## WAPHA's initiatives

Raphael Services is a free service supporting parents through the emotional challenges of early parenthood. WAPHA's commissioned activity includes the provision of mental health nurses across the metropolitan area, to increase the clinical capacity of Raphael Services' existing multidisciplinary team.

WAPHA provides support and education to general practice to identify women at risk of perinatal mental health issues.

WAPHA has also been investigating establishing a service model framework for perinatal mental health.

WAPHA is committed to increasing access to mental health services for parents experiencing perinatal mental health issues.

- 1 Government of Western Australia, North Metropolitan Health Service, King Edward Memorial Hospital. *What is Perinatal and Infant Mental Health?* Accessed at: <https://www.kemh.health.wa.gov.au/Our-services/Service-directory/Statewide-Perinatal-and-Infant-Mental-Health-Program/What-is-Perinatal-and-Infant-Mental-Health>. Accessed on 2 June 2020.
- 2 Government of Western Australia (2020).
- 3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. *2010 Australian National Infant Feeding Survey: indicator results*. Canberra: AIHW.2011
- 4 Rutherford C, Sharp H, Hill J, Pickles A, Taylor-Robinson D. *How does perinatal maternal mental health explain early social inequalities in child behavioural and emotional problems? Findings from the Wirral Child Health and Development Study*. *PLoS ONE* 14(5): e0217342. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.2019>



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This is one of a series of factsheets regarding mental health and primary health care, developed by WAPHA. Further factsheets and other resources can be found at [www.wapha.org.au/mental-health-framework](http://www.wapha.org.au/mental-health-framework). The information in this factsheet was accurate at December 2020.