



THE FEDERATION OF
MOTHER AND
CHILD HOMES
AND SHELTERS



SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES EXPECTING A BABY

WITH STRESS FACTORS IN THEIR LIVES

A baby on the way

CONGRATULATIONS!

You're going to be a parent.

EXPECTING A BABY changes your life. You may have wanted a baby for a long time and you are happy about it.

Or perhaps your situation is different. In addition to being happy, you may also worry about how you will cope with the baby and how you can take care of yourself so that the baby growing in your womb is well. During the pregnancy, you will start to grow into your role of being a parent for your baby.

A baby's brain and body develop faster in the womb and during the first few years of life than at any other subsequent stage of life, and for this reason babies are also sensitive to environmental factors. You can look after your baby by taking good care of yourself. Good relationships with family and friends, a balanced lifestyle, sleep, exercise and

a varied diet will protect you and your baby.

If you have worries or prolonged stress during your pregnancy, you can do something about it. Speak out. Tell someone how you feel and how your pregnancy feels. Are you worried about or afraid of something? What kind of support would you like to receive during your pregnancy and after your baby is born?

All babies and parents expecting a baby deserve all possible support. No parent needs to be alone with their concerns. If you have not told anyone about your situation yet, talk to a nurse or social worker at the maternity and child health clinic and tell them that you need support. Help is available! This is the right time to talk about your concerns. By seeking help, you are taking care of both your baby and yourself.

A close-up photograph of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair. She is wearing a green headband with a floral pattern and a beige, textured knit sweater. She is looking down with a focused expression at a small, white, cylindrical object held in her right hand. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an indoor setting with warm lighting.

PREGNANCY MATTERS!

THE FIRST THOUSAND DAYS OF A BABY'S LIFE

ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT.

During pregnancy, the baby:

- grows and develops safely in the womb;
- recognises the voices of parents and other family members, senses mood, tastes flavours, yawns, thinks, dreams, breathes;
- develops rapidly in body and brain;
- gains first experiences of protection and care;
- interacts with parents for the first time.

During pregnancy, parents

- go through a wide range of emotions and mood swings, from happiness and joy to a sense of inadequacy and worry. These emotions prepare them for parenthood;
- experience changes in their body as well as hormonal changes;
- become aware of their own early experiences or lack of care;
- create the first images of their new baby;
- get to know and become attached to the baby;
- think about what kind of parent they would like to be for their child;
- buy supplies for the baby and prepare the home for the baby's arrival;
- have a special opportunity to make positive changes in their lives.



Every baby and parent deserves the safest possible conditions at the beginning of their lives.



During pregnancy,
it is important for your family
to get help if:

- you are depressed or have other mental health problems;
- you are fearful or anxious;
- you are unable to sleep, eat or take care of yourself and your baby;
- you are constantly stressed;
- there is violence in your family;
- you or your partner use drugs or alcohol;
- you are worried about money or handling your finances.

TELL SOMEONE ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS.

SEEKING HELP AT AN EARLY STAGE IS IN THE BEST

INTEREST OF BOTH YOU AND YOUR BABY.



IF YOU ARE STRESSED ALL THE TIME AND NOT ABLE

TO CALM DOWN, ASK FOR HELP.

Stress during pregnancy

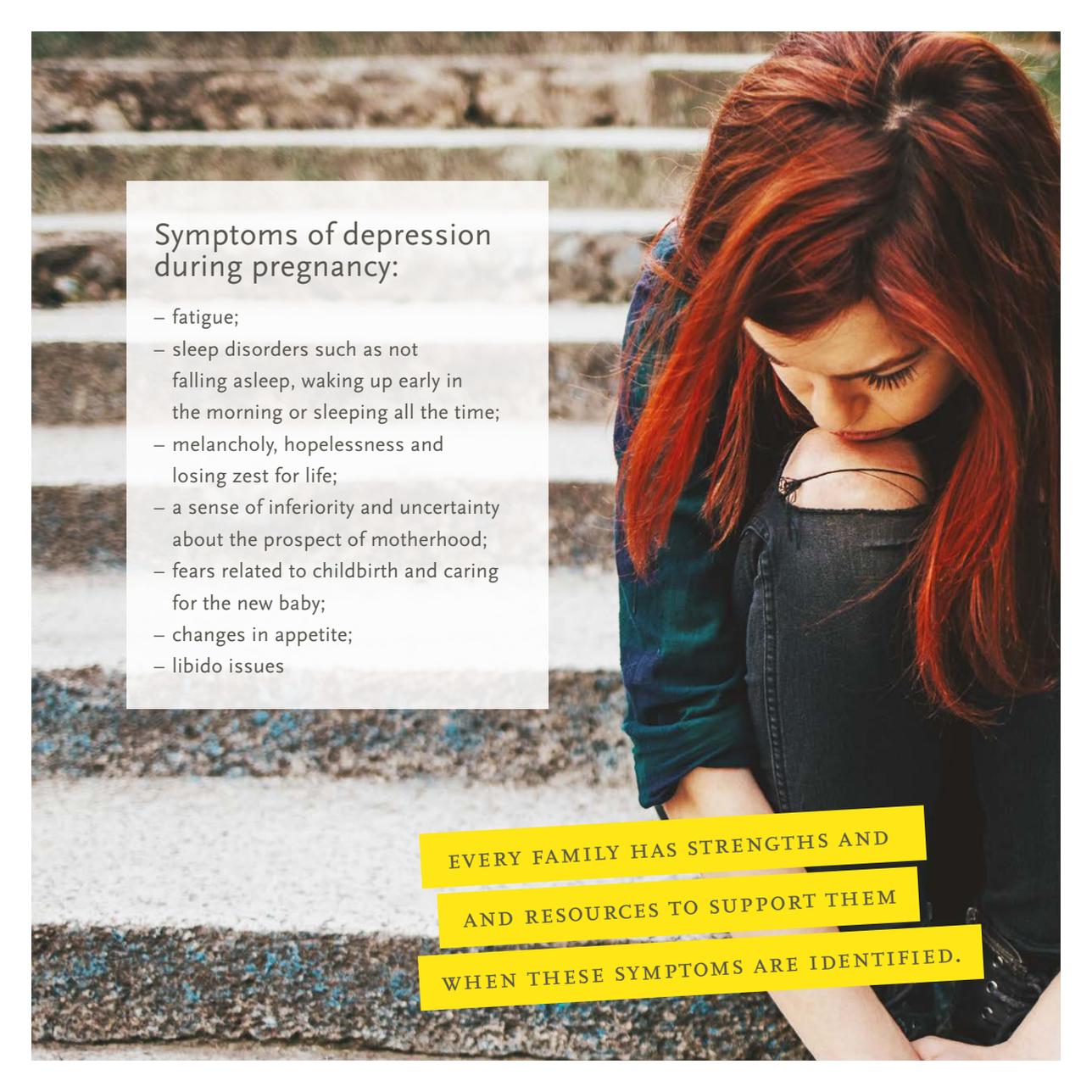
STRESS IS COMMON and familiar to everyone. Stress is a way in which the body and mind reacts to changes and difficult situations. You do not need to worry if you experience mild or short-term stress during your pregnancy. The right amount of stress prepares and helps you to adapt to the idea of your baby's birth and being a parent. It also prepares the baby to adapt to the new environment outside the womb.

You should work on lowering prolonged or particularly severe stress levels.

Stress has a holistic effect on sleep, appetite, mood, coping and relationships. Stress also affects the baby. By regulating your stress levels during pregnancy, you are also helping your baby. When your baby is born, you have more skills and ways to calm your baby.

Even short, calming moments can help:

- tell a friend, partner or professional about your concerns;
- do something that brings you joy and pleasure;
- help your mind and body to calm down using movement, breathing or music, for example;
- remind yourself that the moment will pass.



Symptoms of depression during pregnancy:

- fatigue;
- sleep disorders such as not falling asleep, waking up early in the morning or sleeping all the time;
- melancholy, hopelessness and losing zest for life;
- a sense of inferiority and uncertainty about the prospect of motherhood;
- fears related to childbirth and caring for the new baby;
- changes in appetite;
- libido issues

EVERY FAMILY HAS STRENGTHS AND

AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THEM

WHEN THESE SYMPTOMS ARE IDENTIFIED.

Mental health

IF YOU FEEL SAD during your pregnancy, or perhaps anxious or exhausted, or if you find it difficult to cope, you may suffer from depression. Depression during pregnancy and after childbirth is common; about 10–20 percent of mothers and fathers suffer from it. Depression consumes energy and can take away the joy of pregnancy, and that is why you should not wait for the symptoms to become worse but instead seek help without delay. Professional help is needed to treat prolonged and severe depression.

Becoming a mother or father is a life-changing event, and it also exposes you to other mental health problems.

Pregnancy can bring out strong, negative emotions such as fear, insecurity and anxiety, and it can remind you of unaddressed issues from your own childhood. It can also trigger traumatic memories from the past.

Professionals who see pregnant women and families with babies want the best for you and your baby. It is important that you are honest and open about your well-being so that potential mental health problems can be identified early. Seeking help means that you are taking care of yourself and your baby. Timely treatment prevents problems from getting worse.



Take good care of yourself. You should stick to a routine, get some rest, do outdoor activities and eat nutritious food even on difficult days. This will help to protect you and your baby.

Separation and divorce during pregnancy

THE END OF A RELATIONSHIP during pregnancy creates a sense of loss and grief. The future may seem daunting and uncertain at first. When your relationship ends, you no longer have the presence and support of the other parent. You may be worried about how you can cope with your baby by yourself. You may think about how the other parent will take part in caring for your baby.

Both parents should explore their feelings about the separation to make it easier for them to work together as parents. It is a good idea to think about how the other parent can be involved in the pregnancy and to agree on how you will communicate with each other during the pregnancy. You can also think ahead

about how to arrange meetings and care for your baby. Once the baby is born, you should see a child welfare officer to make a formal agreement about the child's custody, living arrangements and visitation rights. Such an agreement provides a clear framework for the parents' cooperation.

Tell the professionals at the maternity and child health clinic about the end of your relationship, talk about your concerns with your own parents or friends. Support is also available from peer groups. You can ask for a doula to be with you during childbirth. There is nothing to be ashamed of in your situation. While a separation or divorce during pregnancy can be stressful, you can consciously reinforce the sense of joy that expecting a baby brings you.



*Babies are born into different families.
Your family is good and unique as it is.*

A woman with dark, curly hair is sitting on a bed, looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. She is wearing a light pink t-shirt and blue pajama pants with white stars. In the background, a man in a light blue t-shirt is lying on the bed, looking down. The room has a window with a checkered pattern and a green wall.

TELL THE PROFESSIONALS AT THE MATERNITY AND

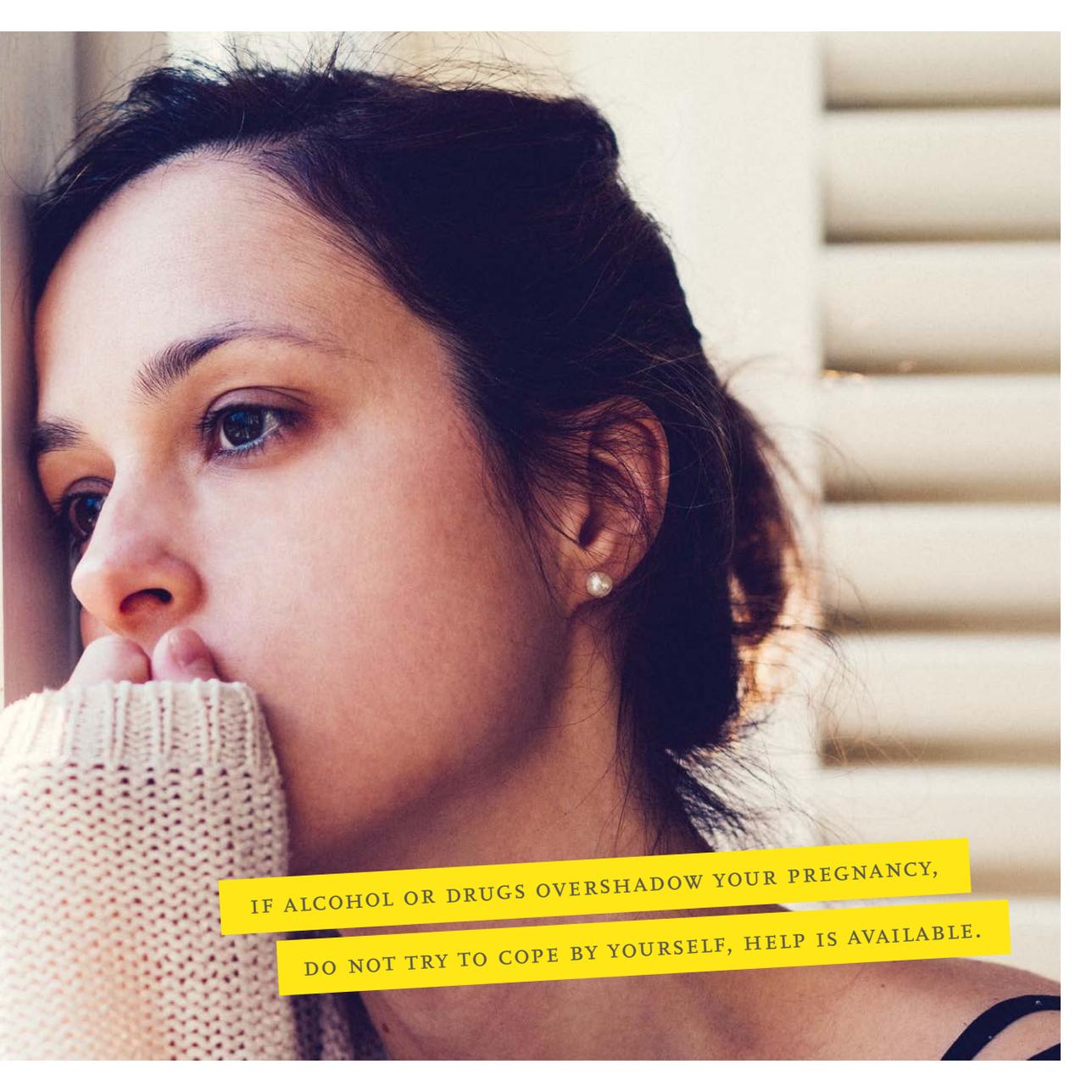
CHILD HEALTH CLINIC ABOUT THE END OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP,

TALK ABOUT YOUR SITUATION WITH YOUR LOVED ONES.

Alcohol or drugs in an expecting family

YOUR PREGNANCY may be overshadowed by your or your partner's use of alcohol or drugs. You may have used alcohol or other intoxicants to get over difficult situations. It is important to avoid all intoxicants during pregnancy to ensure the healthy growth and well-being of your baby. The effects of intoxicants on an unborn baby can be serious.

Your or your partner's use of alcohol or drugs can cause you anxiety and stress. It is important for both parents to think about how they use intoxicants. Even in the womb, the baby needs parents who do not cause them harm. Do not let shame, fear or insecurity stop you from seeking help. You can stop using alcohol or drugs with the right kind of help. You are not alone with the issue and help is available.



IF ALCOHOL OR DRUGS OVERSHADOW YOUR PREGNANCY,

DO NOT TRY TO COPE BY YOURSELF, HELP IS AVAILABLE.



VIOLENCE DOES NOT STOP BY ITSELF AFTER THE BABY IS BORN.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT YOU AND YOUR BABY ARE SAFE.



Threat of violence

YOU AND YOUR BABY have the right to protection and to be safe. No one is allowed to hurt or hit you or the baby in your womb. Violence can be mental, physical, sexual, financial, religious, cultural or digital. Threatening another person and restricting their life is also violence. Constantly living in fear is consuming and hard, and your well-being is important for your growing baby.

If you are afraid that you will be subjected to violence by your partner or someone else, do not wait for the first blow as violence tends to escalate over time. Have a plan for emergencies and tell your loved ones about your situation, even if it seems difficult to do so.

If you have any negative feelings towards the baby in your womb or if you worry that you may harm or have harmed your baby, talk to a professional. Thoughts are not deeds, but they can be stressful and make you worry, and you should not be alone with your thoughts. Violent behaviour is dangerous for the baby.

PREGNANCY IS A GOOD TIME

TO MAKE POSITIVE CHANGES IN YOUR LIFE.



Talk to the professionals at the maternity and child health clinic or contact your local Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters association directly.

WE CAN HELP:

THE VAUVAPERHE.FI CHAT: professionals from our associations offer help and guide you to a face-to-face support service

A BABY BLUES employee can help you to analyse your emotions and thoughts related to pregnancy. Free support is available by phone and face to face. A volunteer doula coordinator will find you a volunteer doula to assist you with the birth.

A DAY GROUP (päiväryhmä) provides support during pregnancy and helps you to prepare for the baby's arrival together with other parents and professionals. You can join groups for families with babies even during your pregnancy.

THE HOME-LIKE COMMUNITY IN A MOTHER AND CHILD HOME (ensikoti) welcomes you even during your pregnancy.

THE HOLDING TIGHT (PIDÄ KIINNI) HOMES FOR MOTHERS AND CHILDREN and the accompanying **OPEN SERVICES** are aimed at families who need support to stay drug free during pregnancy and after childbirth.

THE SHELTERS AND OPEN SERVICES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE (Turvakodit ja väkivaltatyön avopalvelut) help people when there is violence or threat of violence in a relationship.

There is a service that offers help in case of **A SEPARATION OR DIVORCE IN THE FAMILY** (Ero lapsiperheessä).

www.vauvaperhe.fi
www.apuaeroon.fi
www.nettiturvakoti.fi



The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters

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