The Parent-Infant Research Institute (PIRI) supports all parents and their babies (prenatal to 2 years) to have the best possible start to life by creating a Centre of Excellence whose activities are designed to improve emotional wellbeing and optimise infant development. Visit us at www.piri.org.au.

PIRI was incorporated in 2001 to provide world class research and services to mothers, fathers and babies, health professionals and researchers. PIRI is part of Austin Life Sciences, a strategic partnership of research institutes at Austin Health, affiliated with the University of Melbourne through its Executive Director, Professor Jeannette Milgrom.

PIRI’s Board of Management is chaired by Professor Helen Skouteris, and supported by Dr Alan Gemmill, Director of Research together with a dedicated group of clinical, academic and research staff including Dr Michele Burns, Ms Jennifer Ericksen, Dr Charlene Holt, Ms Elizabeth Loughlin Ms Sarah Maher, Dr Andre Rodriguez and Dr Brittany Watson. Technical and Administrative Staff include Darren Edwards, Barbara Frazer Kylie Musone and Neil Walker.

OBJECTIVES: PIRI’s core activity is the conduct of basic and applied RESEARCH. In addition, translating knowledge to practice occurs through the development of parent-infant INTERVENTIONS and PUBLIC HEALTH initiatives. Education and TRAINING of professionals (online and face-to-face) is provided through workshops, study days and conferences.

PIRI PARENT-INFANT PROGRAMS

PIRI is a leader in developing and evaluating treatment programs to help parents make the transition to parenthood and to support the early parent-infant relationship. PIRI’s programs are brief and cost-effective. All programs have detailed manuals and have been evaluated as effective (or are in the process of evaluation). We are still recruiting to our latest programs! To make a referral or enquire about our programs and training, contact PIRI Infant Clinic: (03) 9496 4496; piri@austin.org.au.
OUR LATEST PROGRAMS

Mum Mood Booster Internet Treatment®

This internet treatment for postnatal depression (MumMoodBooster) addresses the unique needs of depressed postnatal women, including infant and partner relationships. MumMoodBooster consists of 6 interactive cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) sessions as well as a library of companion articles on communication skills, problem solving, stress management, getting support, time management, sleep and caring for baby, baby’s needs and the couple relationship. There is also a web forum, telephone support and a partner support website. Funded by NIH, beyondblue, Windermere and NHMRC. Developed in collaboration with ORI, USA. Additional details about this innovative program are found in the Appendix.

Motivational Interviewing: Promoting Motivation, Empowerment and Readiness (PRIMER)®

Substantial numbers of women with postnatal depression (PND) do not accept help. Our brief motivational interviewing intervention delivered by nurses prepares and motivates postnatal women to take action for their own emotional health needs. Funding by Australian Rotary Health (ARH) for a cluster randomised trial.

Beating the Blues Before Birth®

Designed to treat depression and anxiety during pregnancy, 8 CBT sessions help women manage their mood with one couple session providing information and support to partners. Evaluated in a RCT with benefits for mothers and infants. Funded by Bupa Health Foundation and ARF.
OUR SPECIALIST MOTHER-INFANT ATTACHMENT PROGRAMS

BabyHUGS®

BabyHUGS is the most well established of our mother-infant relationship programs, and was developed to be implemented following treatment of maternal PND. BabyHUGS consists of 4 sessions which assist mothers to become more fully engaged and attuned to their infant. Feasibility studies have demonstrated a rapid decline in parenting stress; BabyHUGS has just been successfully evaluated in RCT and developed also as an e-HUGS program. Funded by beyondblue.

Intuitive Mothering®, CommunityHUGS® and PremieStart®

Intuitive Mothering is an innovative 8-week program using natural movement, holding patterns and imaginative play that occurs between mother and infant. It incorporates movement and dance with music and discussion with mothers about what they noticed in their baby’s play. CommunityHUGS is a 10 session playgroup designed for delivery in community settings and incorporates aspects of BabyHUGS, cognitive behaviour therapy, attachment theory and the Intuitive Mothering program. Its evaluation has demonstrated improvements in interaction, maternal anxiety, depression and stress. Funded by DSS.

PremieStart is an intervention that teaches parents about preterm infant behavioural responses, how to protect infants from stress whilst still in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and encourages sensitive involvement from the earliest point. This intervention improves parent-infant interactions and early developmental milestones. Funded by NHMRC.

OUR WELL ESTABLISHED SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

Getting Ahead of Postnatal Depression Group Program®

This highly successful 12-week CBT group program is designed specifically for postnatal women to learn coping strategies to help manage their moods. 9 sessions cover understanding and managing moods; pleasant activities; relaxation on the run; assertiveness and self-esteem; unrealistic expectations of parenting and developing a more helpful thinking style. In addition, 3 couple sessions are held recognising the important role of fathers and the couple relationship. Evaluated in randomised controlled trials and rolled-out internationally.

Overcoming Depression®

This 7-week program is designed for primary care professionals as a counselling intervention informed by CBT. It has been evaluated in a randomised controlled trial and found to be a helpful supplement to GP practice and delivered effectively by nurses and psychologists.

Towards Parenthood®

The Towards Parenthood Program® for pregnant women and their partners prepares parents for the challenges of parenthood. The workbook and online version includes 9 chapters - 8 antenatal and one postnatal. Each chapter contains information and activities to generate thought and reflection, conversation and communication between couples. It has been found to reduce parenting stress and enhance mood (www.towardsparenthood.org.au).

Parent-Infant Research Institute www.piri.org.au
eHUGS™

eHUGS is our newest mother-infant relationship program. The core therapeutic elements of our well established HUGS (Happiness, Understanding, Giving & Sharing) mother-infant attachment programs have been translated to an e-format using play exercises for mothers to use themselves every day in interactions with their baby.

eHUGS consists of 4 interactive modules with step-by-step guidance which assist mothers to become more fully engaged and attuned to their infant.

DadSpace™

As part of our commitment to building a brighter future, PIRI is developing DadSpace, a website dedicated to supporting fathers across Australia. DadSpace provides information, strategies, tips, resources, and support specifically for dads who are expecting or have a new baby.

Development of DadSpace is being informed by evidence-based research and ongoing consultation PIRI is conducting with Australian dads. DadSpace expands on PIRIs perinatal support programs which include MumSpace, a website launched in 2017 offering emotional support to women to help them manage the challenges of perinatal depression and anxiety, in their own time and their own way.

DadBooster™

To add to our existing range of evidence-based mental health support programs for new and expectant parents, the team at PIRI are currently working on a world-first specialised web-based treatment for depressed or anxious new fathers, DadBooster.

Depressed new fathers rarely access traditional support services and their symptoms go largely unacknowledged and untreated. This new program will be based upon the cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approach of our successful MumMoodBooster treatment program for new mums.
MumMoodBooster (MMB) is a secure, private Internet intervention that provides an important treatment option for women who are experiencing postnatal depression (PND). It is particularly helpful for women who might otherwise not seek treatment because of perceived stigma, cost, and logistical difficulties in scheduling clinic visits.

MMB was developed with assistance from a grant from the US National Institutes of Mental Health that was awarded to a multi-national team composed of researchers based in three organizations: Oregon Research Institute, Parent-Infant Research Institute (PIRI) in Melbourne, Australia, and the Iowa Depression and Clinical Research Center. The content of MMB was adapted from the pioneering Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) group treatment program (developed by PIRI) that proved to be helpful for hundreds of women suffering from PND. Over the past 4 years, MMB has been tested both in a feasibility study as well as in a randomized controlled trial that have established its effectiveness in reducing depression and its acceptability to women who have used it both in Australia and the United States (where it is called MomMoodBooster- the Australian version has its own Australian videos of a welcoming health professional and mothers describing their experiences). It is now also adapted for antenatal use (Mum2BMoodBooster).

Once a participant is enrolled in the MMB program, she is able to access each of the 6 sessions — one session per week. Session topics including psychoeducational information about PPD and practical strategies for managing moods, increasing pleasant activities, managing negative thoughts, increasing positive thoughts, and preventing a relapse. Sessions use text, interactions, animations, and videos to engage user interest and encourage follow-through practice of the skills. The program includes online tools to track and chart daily mood ratings and pleasant activities. MMB users can personalize their program content by typing in personal lists, by setting personal goals, and by performing practice change activities in their everyday routines. They can also visit the always-available library of relevant articles on communication skills, getting support, managing stress, managing time, solving problems, sleep and caring for baby, baby’s needs, and partner support.

Since depressed mothers of newborn babies often experience social isolation and stigma, the MMB program also provides access to a private peer-based Web forum in which mothers can post a message as well as read and interact with the messages of other participants.

MMB participants also receive phone calls from a Personal Coach that are designed to provide support, encourage program engagement, and clarify how best to use the online program. Personal Coaches can view an online digital dashboard describing the extent that each participant has used the program. The program also includes a Partner Support website and an Administration website.

MMB details can be reviewed in the following publications:
Choosing Pleasant Activities

Type your pleasant activities in the list using the four major headings. You can also click the List button to the right of each blank line to see ideas that can help get you started.

### With Baby
- **Read books**
- **Dance with baby**
- **Play with toy**
- **Cuddle**
- **Go with baby to storytime at local library**

### By Myself
- **Read**
- **Go shopping**
- **Exercise**
- **Type or click list button**
- **Type or click list button**

### With Friends / Family
- **Do a "Girl's Night Out"**
- **Out for dinner/drink/dessert/coffee**
- **Visit**
- **Use Internet**
- **Type or click list button**

### With Partner
- **Out for dinner/drink/dessert/coffee**
- **Take a walk**
- **Shop without kids**
- **Take class together**
- **Have adult talk**

---

**With Baby**
- Play with toy
  - Play a game (Peek-a-boo, Where's Baby?; So Big!)
  - Stroll with baby
  - Read books
  - Mirror baby's sounds & faces
  - Do fun baby bath
  - Give baby a massage
  - Take Baby and Me class (swim; sound; movement; art/tactile)
  - Go with baby to storytime at local library
  - Dance with baby
  - Sing to baby
  - Cuddle baby
  - Tickle baby
  - Watch baby when he/she is content
- Read books
- Dance with baby
- Play with toy
- Cuddle
- Go with baby to storytime at local library

---

**With Partner**
- **Take class together**
Extreme thoughts: Catastrophizing thoughts

It's normal to worry at times about what might happen in the future. But when your thoughts include worries that are catastrophic - then you are having extreme negative thinking which needs to be controlled. Simply stated, catastrophizing is blowing things out of proportion. For example, telling yourself that a current event is really a sign that something terrible - a catastrophe or the end of the world - will happen in the future. Blowing today's problems out of proportion is counterproductive because it makes it much harder for you to find a solution.

Examples:

1. **Baby cannot get into carseat**
   - The situation...
   - You watch your overly tired baby resisting being put in his car seat.
   - You think...
   - "I can't stand it. This is awful. That baby is going to grow up to be a completely out-of-control adult who will never amount to anything whatsoever!"
   - You feel...
   - Defeated, depressed, hurt.

2. **Baby sick...**

3. **Friend drops over...**

List some examples of your catastrophizing thoughts.

My "Catastrophizing" Thoughts

1. It is just terrible that my child will not be a normal kid.
2. What if my partner leaves me because of my unattractive body.
3. It is awful that he is going to be a deadbeat father.

Extreme Thoughts or Healthy Concerns?

Drag the highlighted sample thought into the box where you think it belongs.

Sample Thoughts

- I get upset when my baby cries.
- I should be able to meet all of my baby's needs.
- I get frustrated when my baby wakes me up.
- I must keep up with the housework.
- I feel embarrassed when my house is a mess.
- I have to stay home with the baby.
- I would like to get out of the house more often.
- It is just terrible that my baby will not be a normal kid.

Extreme Thoughts

- I will never be a good parent.
- What if my child is unable to manage herself when she grows up.
- My partner never helps with the baby.

Healthy Concerns

- Being a parent is harder than I imagined it would be.
- I would like to be more patient.
- Sometimes I want a break from my baby.
- I'm feeling sad today.
- I wish my partner would take care of the baby more often.
In fact, you have it in your power to evaluate whether a particular thought is extreme or whether it is a healthy concern. It is time for you to develop a plan for how you will manage extreme thoughts instead of letting them almost automatically push you into having a negative reaction.
Your partner's needs: It takes time

As we just noted, many women rely on their partners for nurturing, but remember your partners need to have supports, too!

Men become fathers over time, not overnight. Expect that it will take them time to feel comfortable in their new role. Taking the time to be with their baby, learning what they enjoy and how they interact will be the foundations for a good relationship. Dads provide special experiences for babies through their interaction and play.

Dads also need your support to develop their own relationship with their baby. They might not do everything just as you do but this provides the opportunity for a unique relationship to form. Fathers can also experience a sense of loss of their previous relationship with you now that there is a baby to be considered. They may feel a bit displaced or ignored as you lavish all your attention on the new baby.

Most couples experience a decrease in intimacy, especially sexual intimacy, after the arrival of their baby. Communication is the key to navigating your way around some of these delicate issues.

Family issues need to be considered

New parents tend to think more often about their own childhood; they identify with their own parents or parental figures, they think about what they liked or disliked and what has left them with happy or disappointing memories. Dads might wonder how their relationship with their own father has influenced their attitudes and behavioral as a father.

Most people have things they admired about their own parents and things they would like to do differently in their own parenting. There is no such thing as a ‘perfect father’ but it is worth considering what your partner’s ideas are about how he wants to be as a father.