Who attends Community HUGS?

There is no cost to you for the 10-week Community HUGS playgroup as it is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services under the Parents and Children's Programs.

- Having a baby aged under 12 months
- Experiencing difficulties with adjustment to parenthood (depression, anxiety, stress) since the birth of your baby
- Having experienced a difficult start to parenthood through illness, (own or baby's) or prematurity.
- Having consulted with a health professional about your emotional well-being or are willing to consult with a health professional
- Have had an assessment through Austin Health's Perinatal Community Services

Playgroup facilitators:
CHUGS is a collaboration between The Parent Infant Research Institute and Austin Health Perinatal Community Service.
Jennifer Ericksen Clinical Psychologist PIRI
Tamsin Kane Clinical Psychologist Perinatal Community Service Austin Health

Playgroup venue:
The playgroup will be run from the Repatriation Hospital Centaur Wing Level 1
Gate 10/190 Banksia St, Ivanhoe VIC 3079

Thursday 12/2/25, 10am-11.30am for 10 weeks.
1 hour of organised playgroup activities and discussion and 30 minutes for informal social support.

Occasional sessions may be delivered via telehealth due to barriers such as illness.

What women have said about Community HUGS

"I was anxious about attending at first but being in a supportive environment really helped me to get the most out of the program. I could see my baby develop over the weeks, to anticipate the songs and play activities. I'm able to be more available and loving with my baby. It's fantastic!"

"I have more patience with my baby since doing this group and know a lot more about how to play with her and understand her."

"We are just normal people going through some things together. I realise that it's mostly my issues not the baby's, but that they affect her."

"It was good to get together people who have experienced some issues with their babies. I could not identify with other mother's groups; everyone seemed to be coping so well, I felt different. I compared myself with others and felt worse."

"I enjoyed the discussion about how my own childhood was relevant to how I now parent. Learning to understanding my child's feelings was great."

Community HUGS

Happiness, Understanding, Giving & Sharing©

A specialised playgroup focusing on the interaction between mother and baby

Parent-Infant Research Institute

Developed and evaluated by the Parent-Infant Research Institute (PIRI)

Community H.U.G.S. has been made possible through funding from the Australian Government

Adjusting to Parenthood Can Take Time

- Have you been feeling overwhelmed, flat, sad or depressed?
- Are you struggling to cope with your baby?
- Do you find that you no longer get enjoyment from things or feel less confident as a person?
- Do you feel anxious or overwhelmed by the task of parenting an infant?

This well evaluated playgroup might be what you need!

Why attend?

Struggling to adjust to parenthood and all its demands can be a difficult experience for some women. Feeling anxious, depressed or irritable may also interfere with your relationship with your infant. Our Community H.U.G.S. program can support you to find a way to communicate positively with your baby and to experience mutual enjoyment in your interactions.

Community HUGS Playgroup

This is a 10-week playgroup developed by PIRI to promote the relationship between mother and baby by learning positive ways to communicate with each other. Sessions last approximately 1 hour and are followed by an informal chat and refreshments.

Women learn how to:

- understand their baby's cues, and
- interact with their baby in a way that's mutually enjoyable.

Sessions include both play and discussion. Music and movement are used in the group as another way to connect with your baby. Weekly take home information is provided to help you to continue to play during the week between sessions.

What is covered in Community HUGS?

Mother-baby play

- What play does my baby like?
- What do I enjoy? What is stressful & how can I cope?
- Baby massage and managing my anxiety.

Getting to Know Each Other

- Getting to know your baby's temperament
- How your baby communicates with you and how you communicate with them.
- Reading cues and reflecting on needs.
- What your baby needs from you using the Circle of Security graphic

Knowing Yourself

- How you parent; your own family and life experiences
- Learning how your feelings impact on your parenting
- Interpreting your baby's behaviour.

Finding Time for Us

- Putting it all together, finding time for joyful interactions.

Time for you to enjoy

- Refreshments are provided as well as an opportunity to socialise with the other mums and babies.

What might you and your baby get from Community HUGS?

There are usually 5-8 women in a group: an optimal number to allow time for everyone to be heard, while also having enough women in the group to provide a sense of mutual support.

Those who have completed the program, report gaining support and understanding from others. They have experienced playful interactions with their babies and have been able to explore what their baby likes, and how their baby communicates their needs to them. **They report less anxiety, depression and stress and feel more relaxed as mothers!**

Improved mother-baby interactions and communication encourage attachment, infant development as well as maternal well-being and self-esteem.