






We know that the current pandemic is taking its toll on mental health and wellbeing. This also applies to those working in maternity services – in a recent survey more than half of you said that your mental health is worse. To help you remember you are not alone, we've pulled together some of the common stresses you may be experiencing – and some strategies to help you cope.







Stresses







Work and safety

-  Uncertainty, fuelled by rapidly changing guidelines and new or unfamiliar ways of working
-  Staff shortages, longer shifts and feeling more exhausted
-  Worry about your own safety at work, especially if you're in a higher risk group
-  Frustration at the availability of the right PPE and/or testing
-  Anger at a lack of understanding by decision-makers about what you need

Professional practice

-  Worry that you're not able to provide optimal care or practice according to professional ideals
-  Fears for women and babies in your care
- Managing anxieties and fears of women and their partners
-  Not always having the answers for women and their partners
-  Concerns that PPE may be a barrier to building relationships with women and their partners





Family life

-  Worry that you may transmit the virus to your family
-  Fears of becoming ill and being unable to care for family, including children
-  Financial worries if family members are furloughed or unable to work
-  Ability to shop for essentials, like food and medication supplies
-  Managing work and home life, especially home schooling
-  Increased risk of domestic abuse








Strategies





Work and safety

-  Work closely with your local RCM health and safety reps on working conditions
-  If you are at higher risk, ask your manager for a proper risk assessment
-  Ensure you can take breaks for food, drink or just time away from the unit/ward
-  Make sure you know what PPE you need for all aspects of your role and raise concerns if you can't access it

Wellbeing

-  Look after your mental health, be self-aware and take time out when you can
-  Don't be afraid to share your worries and ask for support from friends or family - and your RCM branch
-  Make use of the psychological support and resources available, like NHS in Mind
-  Be creative - think of new ways of providing care to women
-  Try to keep some good routines with exercise and eating well

Managers can...

-  Build trust through sensitive conversations so staff can explore their fears and concerns
-  Listen to staff and communicate clearly, honestly and without judgment
-  Provide the ongoing support of PMA and supervisory group meetings.
-  Recognise the satisfaction staff get from providing quality care and look for opportunities to optimise these experiences

