



Child's play

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RECENTLY I had one of those priceless discussions with a soon-to-be new mother who was vowing that the arrival of her eagerly anticipated child would not unduly impact on her or her husband's lives.

She passionately explained that she was not going to allow the child to affect her relationship or other interests.

She recounted stories about couples she knew who had suffered from a lack of quality time together because of the new baby and she was adamant that would not happen to her.

All I could do was smile and wish her all the very best of luck.

The true physical and emotional impact of giving birth is something rarely openly discussed between women until after they have experienced it themselves.

Let's face it, we don't want to unfairly scare these poor women — and they're unlikely to believe us anyway. But from the moment your first child is born, life changes dramatically forever.

It is undoubtedly one of the most thrilling and enriching things a woman can experience. It's also got to be one of the most terrifying, overwhelming and exhausting.

Postnatal depression is one of the more publicly recognised emotional issues that some women experience after birth, with almost

10 per cent of new mothers suffering from it. But Murdoch Children's Research Institute group leader, Associate Professor Stephanie Brown, says anxiety is also becoming an increasingly concerning problem post-birth.

She says a new study reveals 8.5 per cent of women experience intense anxiety or panic attacks in the first nine months of their child's life. But almost seven in 10 of those fail to seek professional help.

"Reasons for not seeking help included feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable talking about their emotional difficulties," Ms Brown says.

She says public health campaigns have made it easier for women to admit to feeling depressed, but less comfortable with talking about anxiety.

"Not enough attention has been given to the impact of anxiety on new mothers' health and wellbeing in public health campaigns," she says.

"Women still see health professionals as being there for the baby and are reluctant to talk about issues affecting their own health and recovery after birth.

"The definite message is that women would welcome questions (from their GP and maternal health nurse) about emotional difficulties that included anxiety as well as depression."

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