

Maternal Mental Health Month

January is Maternal Mental Health Month. Pregnancy and a new baby can bring a range of life changes and emotions about those changes. Many women feel overwhelmed, sad, and anxious during their pregnancies and following the birth of their baby. For some women, these feelings go away on their own. For others, these emotions may stay for a while and can be more serious.

Postpartum depression (PPD) and anxiety are medical conditions that happen after a woman has a baby. Researchers believe that depression is one of the most common problems women experience during and after pregnancy. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 1 in 8 women experience postpartum depression.

Women with postpartum depression or anxiety may feel:

- Extremely sad or angry without warning
- Foggy or may have trouble completing tasks
- “Robotic,” like they are just going through the motions of life
- Very anxious around the baby and their other children
- Guilty and like they are failing at motherhood
- Unusually irritable or angry

Postpartum depression and anxiety can often feel like they control your life and can be hard to get rid of on your own. Both postpartum depression and anxiety are treatable. If you are experiencing symptoms of PPD, reach out to your doctor to discuss treatment options. In addition to working with a healthcare professional, support can include:

- **Rest.** It's important you get as much rest and sleep as possible.
- **Ask for support.** Reach out to your partner, family or friends for help and support with the baby and other tasks.
- **Make time for yourself.** Go out with friends, spend time alone with your partner or give yourself a self-care day.
- **Find a community of other new mothers.** Talking with other mothers may make you feel less alone in this experience. Look into support groups in your area.

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Learn more: [nichd.nih.gov/ncmhpep/initiatives](https://www.nichd.nih.gov/ncmhpep/initiatives)

Supporting a Loved One Experiencing PPD (Postpartum Depression)



If your loved one is a new parent struggling with postpartum depression (PPD) or anxiety, it is important to offer support and show you care. Below are some tips for showing support for your loved one in this new beginning.

- 1. Learn.** Learn about the signs of PPD, possible treatments and resources to help women in your life who are experiencing PPD. This can help you feel more confident talking about PPD and offer resources if they are interested and ready.
- 2. Listen.** If you're concerned about a loved one experiencing PPD, one of the most important things you can do to support them is to listen. Find a time and a comfortable place where you can talk without distractions. Begin by expressing your concerns. Use "I" statements to avoid sounding like you're blaming or judging her. Listen as she responds without interrupting.
- 3. Create a supportive environment.** Below are some things you can do to create a supportive environment to help your loved one through her healing journey.
 - Support her in the daily household and childcare tasks.
 - Prepare meals, pick up groceries or buy supplies for the baby.
 - Encourage her to take time for self-care and take breaks from caring for the baby.
 - Be attentive, calm, listen and respond to her needs.

Learn more: <https://womenshealth.gov>

January is Birth Defects Awareness Month

Every 4.5 minutes, a baby is born in the United States with a condition that affects the structure or function of their body. These conditions are referred to as birth defects. These can vary widely in how and where they affect the body and include anything from a cleft lip to heart problems. Birth defect is a medical term, but it does not mean these babies or people are wrong. It just means that their body structure and function may be different from others. Medical advances have greatly improved the health and life expectancy of babies born with birth defects. However, many babies need treatment and care for life.

If you are pregnant, talk with your healthcare provider about steps to prevent and screen for birth defects. In addition to speaking with your healthcare provider:

- Maintain your overall health.
- Talk with your doctor about your medical history and the impact on your pregnancy.
- Avoid harmful substances while pregnant.
- Look into regular screenings throughout your pregnancy.

Disparities in Maternal and Infant Health

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the likelihood of death from pregnancy-related causes among women who identify as Black, American Indian or Alaska Native is three times higher compared to their White counterparts. Similarly, babies born to Black, AIAN and NHPI people have markedly higher mortality rates than those born to White people.

These maternal and infant health disparities reflect broader underlying social and economic inequities. Health insurance and access to care are important factors in why people of color have different health outcomes for their mothers and babies.

More attention to mother and baby health has led to more efforts and resources to improve health outcomes for mothers and babies of color.

Learn more: <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy>

Healthy Beginnings for the New Year

The start of the new year brings opportunities for new beginnings and growth. It is a great time to reflect on the past and set goals for the future. New Year's resolutions often focus on your physical health, but why not make 2026 the year you focus on your mind's health? Below are some tips for making 2026 all about nurturing your mind.

- 1. Embrace the 'Imperfectionist' mindset.** Let go of unrealistic expectations and instead embrace a mindset of celebrating mistakes as stepping stones to growth. Give yourself permission to make mistakes and learn from them.
- 2. Self-care.** Self-care is more than just face masks and bubble baths. Commit to carving out regular moments of self-care this year. The key to effective self-care is prioritizing time and activities that fill your cup and reenergize you. This can include anything from taking regular walks in nature, playing a game you enjoy, spending time with loved ones, or eating food that is enjoyable and boosts your energy.
- 3. Curate your social circle.** Surround yourself with people who radiate positivity and bring energy to your life, rather than drain it. Make space and time for the people in your life who encourage your growth and happiness, not take away from it.
- 4. Take control of your screen time.** Mindless scrolling can drain your mental energy and impact your mood. Set boundaries for yourself and your time spent on screens.
- 5. Learn the art of saying 'no.'** Your time and energy are valuable resources. Saying 'no' is okay when something doesn't align with your wellbeing or personal goals. Set boundaries with your time, kindly but firmly.
- 6. Move your body.** Find a physical activity that brings you joy — dancing, yoga, walking, biking or swimming. Moving your body releases endorphins that are proven to boost your mood.

Learn more: <https://comphc.org/new-beginnings>

Early childhood development

The first three years of a child's life are the most impactful for their long-term mental health and wellbeing. It's important to teach your children positive practices for dealing with their emotions from a young age so they can continue to learn and practice coping skills as they grow up. Here are some things you can do as a parent of a young child to help them process and cope with their feelings:

- **Name the feeling.** Feelings can be overwhelming for children. Help them identify their feelings by naming what they're feeling – sad, happy, angry, excited, frustrated or annoyed.
- **Don't fear the feeling.** Ask and acknowledge your child's feelings to send the important message that their feelings are valued and important.
- **Avoid minimizing their feelings.** Acknowledging the strong feelings, rather than minimizing them, can open the door to coping with the feelings.
- **Teach tools for coping.** It's natural to want to 'fix' things for your child but teaching them how to cope with feelings on their own is important.

Becoming a parent and parenting a young child can be a stressful and intimidating task, but you are not alone. There are steps you can take to ensure your child learns helpful tools to understand their emotions at a young age. Explore resources for encouraging positive emotional reactions below.

Learn more: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resource>

MAPLE ROASTED CHICKEN AND ACORN SQUASH



This Maple Roasted Chicken and Acorn Squash is a comforting and easy recipe to have on hand at the start of the new year!

Makes 6 servings.

Ingredients:

- 1 medium acorn squash
- 4 medium carrots, chopped (about 2 cups)
- 1 medium onion, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 6 bone-in chicken thighs (about 2-1/4 pounds)
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon coarsely ground pepper

Directions:

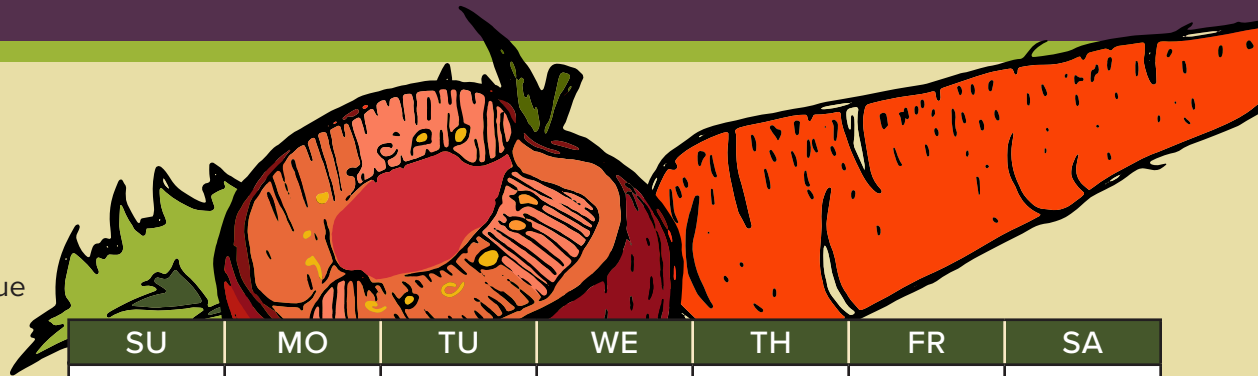
Before you begin, wash your hands.

1. Preheat oven to 450° F. Cut squash lengthwise in half; remove and discard seeds. Cut each half crosswise into 1/2-in. slices; discard ends.
2. Place squash, carrots and onion in a greased 13x9 inch. baking pan; top with chicken, skin side down. Roast 10 minutes.
3. Turn chicken over; drizzle with maple syrup and sprinkle with salt and pepper.
4. Roast 25-30 minutes longer or until a thermometer inserted in chicken reads 170°-175° and vegetables are tender.

NUTRITION INFORMATION

| Calories per serving | 363 |
|----------------------|--------|
| Sodium | 497 mg |
| Fat | 14 g |
| Saturated Fat | 4 g |
| Carbohydrates | 36 g |
| Protein | 24 g |
| Cholesterol | 81 mg |
| Total Sugars | 23 g |
| Fiber | 3 g |

JANUARY 2026



MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a federal holiday in the United States that honors the life and legacy of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. The day is a time to reflect on King’s message of equality, justice and nonviolence, and to continue working towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

Learn more: thekingcenter.org/king-holiday-2026

SMART GOALS

The new year is a great time to set personal and professional goals for the upcoming year. By using the SMART criteria, individuals and organizations can create well-defined goals that lead to success.

Learn more: forbes.com/advisor/business/smart-goals

THE YEAR OF YOUR HEALTHIEST SELF

The new year is a great time to focus on your overall health, which includes your physical, emotional and financial wellbeing.

Learn more: nih.gov/health-information

CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION

Routine screenings can help find cervical cancer early and should begin at age 25.

Learn more: cancer.org/cancer/types/cervical-cancer

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| | | | | New Year's Day | | |
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| | Martin Luther King Jr. Day | | | | | |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| | | International Holocaust Remembrance Day | | | | |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |