



INFANT (INfant Feeding, Active play and NuTrition): Supporting the health, social and emotional wellbeing of women with a new baby

- Supporting women with preventive health and early intervention during their baby's first 2,000 days is critical for managing their health, social and emotional wellbeing.
- **INFANT** is an evidence-based program that supports women from the start of their baby's life, by improving dietary patterns, knowledge and self-efficacy, infant feeding practices and connecting women with other parents and local health and community services.
- INFANT helps to build social and community connections – important in promoting the mental health and wellbeing of women during the postnatal period.

Pregnancy and postpartum is a critical period to support health, social and emotional wellbeing

- INFANT offers evidence-based information and skills on infant feeding, nutrition and play for the whole family which can improve maternal self-efficacy¹ and may also reduce parental stress.
- The **My Baby Now app** gives parents access to advice 24/7, whenever they need it.
- Group-based support provides opportunities to share experiences with other parents in a supportive environment, overcoming some of the common barriers faced by women postpartum including social isolation and knowing how to access support services.
- Led by early years practitioners including child and family health nurses, INFANT develops connections with local services and promotes support from women's health professionals.

Healthy behaviours are linked to mental health and wellbeing

- Healthy eating and being active (at least 60 minutes per week) can reduce the risk of depression among adults². Importantly, during the perinatal period up to one in five mothers may experience postnatal depression and/or anxiety³.
- INFANT supports healthy eating habits including a diet rich in vegetables and fruit and low in non-core foods, which is associated with better mental health among parents and children⁴.
- By promoting active family time such as pram walking and active play, INFANT creates opportunities for women's physical activity and additional mental health benefits through social and community connections.

Building social and community connection during a time of new challenges and life changes

- INFANT helps to connect parents with other new parents, providing social and community connection. The group-based format of INFANT provides a *"relaxed, friendly environment that encourage(s) peer discussion, social connections and trust."*⁵
- Engaging new parents in early parenting support like INFANT connects families with health and community services, helping them to access other services at the right time, when they need it.
- Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of parents can have a significant and lasting benefit to the mental health and wellbeing of their children.⁶

There's so many isolated young mums out there. So I really try and hone in on the playgroup aspect and all the different services...there's been one lady, she sort of needed a little bit of extra support, and I sort of said to her that I thought it would be really good if she was to speak to her maternal health nurse and see if she could get some extra support." – INFANT Group Facilitator.

¹ Spence, A.C., Campbell, K.J., Crawford, D.A. et al (2014). Mediators of improved child diet quality following a health promotion intervention: the Melbourne INFANT Program. *International Journal of Behaviour Nutrition & Physical Activity* 11, 137. doi.org/10.1186/s12966-014-0137-5

² Department of Health (2020). Co-benefits of a healthy lifestyle for mental wellbeing. Victorian Government: Melbourne. health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/co-benefits-of-a-healthy-lifestyle-for-mental-wellbeing

³ PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting Australia (PwC Australia) (2019). The cost of perinatal depression and anxiety in Australia. perinatalwellbeingcentre.org.au/news/cost-of-perinatal-depression-and-anxiety-in-australia

⁴ Rioseco, P., Warren, D. & Daraganova, G. (2020) Children's social-emotional wellbeing: the role of parenting, parents' mental health and health behaviours. Australian Institute of Family Studies: Canberra. aifs.gov.au/publications/childrens-social-emotional-wellbeing

⁵ Love, P., Laws, R., Litterbach, E., & Campbell, K. (2018). Factors Influencing Parental Engagement in an Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Program Implemented at Scale: The Infant Program. *Nutrients*, 10(4), 509. MDPI AG. [dx.doi.org/10.3390/nu10040509](https://doi.org/10.3390/nu10040509)

⁶ Rioseco, P., Warren, D. & Daraganova, G. (2020) Children's social-emotional wellbeing: the role of parenting, parents' mental health and health behaviours. Australian Institute of Family Studies: Canberra. aifs.gov.au/publications/childrens-social-emotional-wellbeing