Preventing Postpartum Mood Disorders in High-Risk Women

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Does it have to be as hard the next time around?
Risk Factors
Women with previous pregnancy-related depressive episodes are at a 50% to 62% increased risk of recurrent episodes with subsequent pregnancies.

Individual or family HISTORY OF DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY is one of the greatest risk factors, with anywhere from 25-55% of mothers suffering from PPD reporting that their symptoms began during pregnancy.

There was a strong-moderate relationship between experiencing a LIFE EVENT (death of a loved one, relationship breakdowns or divorce, losing a job or moving home) and developing postpartum depression.

Studies have consistently shown a negative correlation between postpartum depression and EMOTIONAL AND INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT.

Perceived **SOCIAL ISOLATION** is a strong risk factor for depressive symptoms postpartum.


POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION: LITERATURE REVIEW OF RISK FACTORS AND INTERVENTIONS

Donna E. Stewart, MD, FRCPC, E. Robertson, M.Phil, PhD, Cindy-Lee Dennis, RN, PhD, Sherry L. Grace, MA, PhD, Tamara Wallington, MA, MD, FRCPC, ©University Health Network Women’s Health Program 2003
Prevention
General Questions

What were the biggest challenges last time?

What did you do that helped you feel better last time?

Which people were most supportive?

What can you ask others to do for you this time?

What do you hope you can do for yourself this time?

What advice do you want to give other pregnant women now?
**WHAT DID I LEARN THE FIRST TIME AROUND?**

- What were the biggest challenges after the birth of my other child(ren)?

- What did I do that helped me feel better postpartum?

- Which people were most supportive to me and my baby?

- What do I hope I can do for myself after this baby is born?

- What can I ask other people to do for me?

- What advice do I want to give other pregnant women?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong to Moderate Risk Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous postpartum depression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression/anxiety during pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous history of depression</td>
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- Therapy
- Medication
- Relaxation techniques
- Social connection
- Exercise
- Yoga
- Non-traditional medicine
Women who have a history of depression/anxiety, prenatal depression/anxiety or postpartum depression/anxiety, are at risk of experiencing depression/anxiety after their next baby is born. Depression and anxiety feed off each other like a snowball, growing bigger as time goes on.

However, the snowball can roll the other way, gathering positive momentum too. The hardest part is usually getting the snowball to stop rolling in the wrong direction, to go against what depression and anxiety want you to do and start doing things that will quiet the negativity or the worry.

Which of the Positive Mood Loop activities can you bring into your life, one day at a time?
Stressful recent life events

Strong to Moderate Risk Factors

• Recognize the impact of stress

• Stress release

• Therapy

• Process grief/loss

• Social support

• Solutions to the stressful circumstances
How is stress impacting my life?

What is my favorite way to release stress?

- Walk and talk with a friend
- Dance around the house
- Write in my journal
- Get lost in a project
- Yell, cry, hit pillows
- Work with a therapist
- Be outside
- Relaxation/meditation
- Yoga/Run/Hike/Bike/ ________
INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT
- Prenatal health
- Childbirth education
- Infant care
- Breastfeeding counseling
- Sleep
- Postpartum Health

INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT
- Care for other children
- Household chores
- Physical support for sleep
- Physical support for self-care

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
- Listening
- Spending time
- Reassurance
- Camaraderie
• Review the strength of her current social support system

• Decide what support she needs and make a list of potential resources for each area

• Highlight ways she has bolstered her support system in the past
Social Support

Looking at the various support needs you have. Create a diagram for each need, using the circles and lines to help you see who supports you, who needs your support and what areas of your life do you need to find more resources.

Types of Support:
- Emotional
- Practical
- Informational/Guidance

(You can also focus on other types of support that are important to you, i.e.: spiritual, financial, self-care, etc.)

Key:
- Strong Support (pointing toward the circle)
- Moderate Support (pointing toward the circle)
- Strong Lack of Support or Drain on Energy (pointing away from circle)
- Moderate Lack of Support or Drain on Energy (pointing away from circle)
- No Support/Area that needs support
### Moderate Risk Factors

- High levels of childcare stress
- Low self-esteem
- Maladaptive coping skills
- Difficult infant temperament

### Small Risk Factors

- Obstetric and pregnancy complications
- Negative cognitive attributions
- Quality of relationship with partner
- Socioeconomic status

- Assessment of these issues in a woman’s life via conversation is important when creating a prevention plan.
- Many of these are long-term issues that need long-term solutions.
- Fears of what might happen with the birth, the baby or postpartum need to be addressed while pregnant.
Resilience

- How do I feel about myself as a mother?
- How prepared do I feel to have another baby?
- How good am I at asking for help?
- How important is my own self-care to me?
- How can I tell when I feel depressed or anxious?
- Are other people in control of my life or am I?

If you answer most of these questions from a place of self-knowledge and self-care, it is likely that you will know what you need postpartum and that you will ask for help as you go.

If you answer most of the questions from a place of self-doubt or self-hate, you may not recognize what you need postpartum and may not seek help. Pregnancy is a perfect time to practice. Consider finding a therapist, spiritual adviser or trusted friend to talk to about some of these questions.
I know how to parent a newborn

I know the difference between
Mothering Myths and Mothering Reality

I DO Know Now
What I Wish I Knew Then!

I know that the hard days don’t last forever

I know better what I need and who to ask
I know how to parent a newborn

I know the difference between
Mothering Myths and Mothering Reality

I DO Know Now What I Wish I Knew
Then!

I know that the hard days
don’t last forever

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**My New and Realistic Expectations for after this baby is born**

- I will prioritize sleep over getting things done for the first 6 weeks.
- I will invite people over who I know will help me rather than people I will feel obligated to entertain.
Q&A

What role do you see yourself playing in helping women create prevention plans?

What new information do you have that will support you in your practice to help develop prevention plans?

What other resources do you need to help women at risk develop prevention plans?
Thank you!