

Pregnancy: How to Manage Depression

Depression is common during pregnancy. Some people may become depressed for the first time during pregnancy. Others may have already had depression before pregnancy. Managing your depression is important for your health and your baby's health.

If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant and have depression, talk to your doctor about treatment. Depression can be treated during your pregnancy.

What are the symptoms of depression?

Depression affects people differently. Some symptoms of depression include:

- Feeling sad or hopeless and losing interest in daily activities. These are the most common symptoms of depression.
- Sleeping too much or not enough.
- Feeling tired. You may feel as if you have no energy.
- Eating too much or too little.
- Having trouble focusing or making decisions.
- Feeling worthless or having suicidal thoughts.

Talk to your doctor or midwife right away if you are having any of these symptoms. You can also call the Maternal Mental Health Hotline at 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262) for support.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of



emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME to 741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to **988lifeline.org** for more information or to chat online.

How is depression during pregnancy treated?

Treatment options include:

- **Counseling.** This can focus on how you feel about your pregnancy, your relationships, and changes in your life. It gives you emotional support. And it can help you solve problems and set goals. One type of counseling helps you take charge of how you think and feel. This is called cognitive behavioral therapy.
- **Antidepressant medicines.** These medicines may improve or get rid of depression symptoms. Whether you need them depends a lot on how bad your symptoms are. Talk to your doctor about whether medicine is right for you.

- **Other treatments.** Some other therapies that can help include light therapy, exercise or yoga, and massage therapy.

Managing depression is important for your own health and the health of your baby. Depression can affect your sleep, your nutrition, and your energy to take care of yourself during pregnancy. It can also affect how you bond with your baby after birth. But treatment can help. Talk to your doctor about what treatment options are right for you.

Should you take antidepressant medicines during your pregnancy?

Some antidepressants are safer than others to use while you are pregnant. If you are pregnant and are taking antidepressants, talk to your doctor right away. You may need to switch to a new antidepressant. If you are planning to get pregnant, discuss your medicines with your doctor.

If you have depression, you and your doctor can decide whether you should take an antidepressant during your pregnancy. This decision should weigh the benefits of the medicine against the possible risks. Some factors to consider in your decision are:

- How severe your symptoms are.
- Your history of depression and medicines used.
- How well other treatments, such as counseling, work for you.
- The safety of the medicine to the baby.
- The possible side effects for you.
- If you have other mental health conditions.

All medicines have some risks. But you and

your doctor may decide that the best thing you can do for your health and your baby's health is to take medicine for your depression.

What can you expect if you take medicines during pregnancy?

- You may begin to feel better within 1 to 2 weeks of starting antidepressant medicine. It can take as many as 6 to 8 weeks to see more improvement. If you have problems or concerns about your medicines, or you do not notice any improvement within 2 weeks, talk to your doctor.
- You may have side effects from the medicine. Many of the side effects are temporary and will go away as you take the medicine. If they continue, or they bother you too much, talk to your doctor. You may be able to take a different medicine or try a smaller dose.
- If the first medicine you take does not work, you may need a different one. You may need to try several before you find one that is right for you.
- Make sure to tell your doctor if you take any other medicines, including ones you can buy without a prescription. Some medicines may interact with your antidepressant medicine. Tell your doctor about any other health problems you have.

If you plan to stop taking your medicine, talk with your doctor first about how to do it safely. Your doctor may want you to slowly decrease your dose. Stopping antidepressants can cause side effects and may cause your depression to come back or get worse. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.