



# Pregnant Women with Mental Health and Substance Use Conditions



If you have a mental health or substance use condition and are pregnant, there are important steps that you can take to have a healthy pregnancy and baby. Mental health and substance use conditions can be treated with counseling, medicines, and recovery support during pregnancy, along with good prenatal care. Regular communication between the healthcare professionals treating your mental health and substance use conditions and those supporting your pregnancy is very important.

## *What my provider should know about me* (mental health provider, primary care practitioner, gynecologist)

- My current and past medical history
- My current and past history of mental health conditions and use of substances, including, including tobacco and alcohol
- My current and past diagnoses and mental health challenges
- My life circumstances and conditions
- My goals for my mental health and well-being
- My pregnancy history (including infertility or pregnancy loss and other medical complications)
- Any other medical problems
- My current and past medication names and dosages and any side effects
- My current and past vitamins, supplements, and over-the-counter medication names and any side effects
- Medications or other treatments that have helped the most with my mental health and substance use

- Any economic or financial issues, including housing stability, food security, and job security
- If I don't have health insurance or have concerns about my health insurance
- The kind of support I should expect from family, partner, friends, and community during and after pregnancy
- If I am planning to breastfeed my newborn

## *What should I ask my provider?*

- How will treatment for my mental health or substance use challenges impact me?
- What mental health symptoms might I experience during pregnancy?
- How do I know if I need therapy or other mental health treatment?
- How do I expect my mental health symptoms to change throughout pregnancy?
- What are the risks and benefits of my current medicines during pregnancy and breastfeeding?
- What risks are associated with not continuing my current medications or other treatments?
- What other medication treatments or non-medication treatments might be helpful during my pregnancy?
- Are there any support groups you recommend that I join?
- Under what circumstances would my provider reach out to Child Protective Services?

## Things to do

- Talk to your mental health and other healthcare providers as soon as you learn that you are pregnant.
- Discuss your treatment options with your mental health and other healthcare providers. The benefits of continuing medications may outweigh the risk of stopping medications. Any decision about medications should be made carefully by you and your provider.
- When you first meet your pregnancy care team, let them know:
  - Your current and past mental health conditions, and
  - What medicines, supplements, and other treatment approaches have been helpful.
- Learn more about your mental health conditions. Being knowledgeable can help you stick to your treatment plan. Some useful and reliable websites include:
  - **American Psychiatric Association:** [psychiatry.org](https://psychiatry.org)
  - **National Institute on Mental Health:** [nimh.nih.gov](https://nimh.nih.gov)
  - **National Institute on Drug Abuse:** [nida.nih.gov](https://nida.nih.gov)
  - **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism:** [niaaa.nih.gov](https://niaaa.nih.gov)
- Provide your pregnancy care team and mental health provider with information about how to contact each other, with your permission, to allow them to better coordinate your care.
- Reach out to family, friends, and the community for support and help during and after pregnancy.
- Consider taking a second opinion if you feel your needs are not met.
- Get involved in decision-making about your treatment plan.
- Inform your provider if you have any transportation issues.
- Let your provider know if you have difficulty scheduling and/or keeping appointments.
- Consider whether you might benefit from additional counseling or support groups.
- Ask about safe sleep practices and the advantages and disadvantages of breastfeeding.
- Learn about safe breastfeeding practices:
  - Discuss the risk and benefits of medications with your provider.
  - Inquire about relevant educational resources and support groups.
- Practice self-care: Manage stress with tools such as meditation or yoga, a healthy diet, exercise, and enough sleep.
- If you have suicidal thoughts or concerns for your immediate safety, call 911.

## More information

- **MGH Center for Women's Mental Health:** [womensmentalhealth.org/specialty-clinics-2/postpartumpsychiatric-disorders-2](https://womensmentalhealth.org/specialty-clinics-2/postpartumpsychiatric-disorders-2)
- **Postpartum Support International:** [postpartum.net](https://postpartum.net)
- **MotherToBaby:** [mothertobaby.org](https://mothertobaby.org)
- **National Maternal Mental Health Hotline:** [mchb.hrsa.gov/national-maternal-mental-health-hotline](https://mchb.hrsa.gov/national-maternal-mental-health-hotline)
- **CDC Hear Her Campaign:** [cdc.gov/hearher/index.html](https://cdc.gov/hearher/index.html)
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness:** [nami.org](https://nami.org)