

## Depression / Anxiety in Pregnancy

For many women, news of a pregnancy can bring joy and happiness. For some, it may also bring feelings of sadness, guilt, fear, resentment or low mood. It used to be believed that pregnancy hormones protect you from experiencing any mental health difficulties. Unfortunately, this is certainly not the case...

A great deal of emphasis has been placed on the detection and treatment of Post Natal Depression (PND). However, antenatal (before birth) depression and anxiety are thought to be more frequent (10-15%) and approximately half of all PND appears to start in pregnancy.

Some women experience sadness and moodiness during their pregnancy especially in the early weeks, which is perfectly normal and relates to the number of physical, emotional and hormonal changes that your body is going through. Other women however, may experience more severe, longer lasting symptoms of depression or anxiety. It is thought that 1 in 10 women will experience depression at some point throughout their pregnancy.

### Common symptoms of Depression in Pregnancy

- feeling weepy and helpless
- having trouble concentrating
- preoccupied with constant, negative thoughts
- trouble concentrating
- problems sleeping
- feeling constant, extreme fatigue
- wanting to eat all the time, or have lost appetite completely
- feeling that nothing is enjoyable anymore
- feeling low spirited for most of the day
- often feeling anxious / worried

### Common Anxieties in Pregnancy

- *About the baby* – worries about abnormalities, problems, whether you'll love the baby, how the baby looks, its sex, losing the baby before / during / after birth.
- *About labour* – how to cope with the pain, losing control, being naked in front of others, things going wrong, who will support you, things going wrong.
- *About being a parent* – coping with responsibility, feeding, lack of sleep, adjusting to Motherhood, managing financially, increased pressure on relationship.

## Specific Causes / Risk Factors

There are many factors believed to be related to the development of depression and / or anxiety during pregnancy:

- *Hormone Changes*
- *Stresses and Strains (e.g. looking after young children)*
- *Stressful Life Events*
- *Low Income / Poor Social Support*
- *Problems with pregnancy*
- *Complications in a previous pregnancy or birth*
- *Infertility or Miscarriage*
- *Physical or Emotional Abuse*
- *Domestic Violence or Relationship conflict*
- *Personal History of Mood / Anxiety Disorders / PND*
- *Family History of Perinatal Psychiatric Illness*
- *History of Childhood Abuse*
- *Unplanned Pregnancy*
- *Single Motherhood*

### Ways to Cope with Depression / Anxiety during Pregnancy

- Talk to your *midwife or GP* during any of your appointments about how you have been feeling and go back to them if you find your mood continues to remain low.
- Make yourself a *top priority and relax* as much as you can before the baby comes. Taking care of yourself is an essential part of taking care of your baby.
- Get some *exercise* and fresh air regularly. It is not advisable to suddenly start an exercise in pregnancy that your body is not used to. However, swimming, walking, pregnancy yoga and antenatal aqua aerobics are recommended.
- *Talk to others* about how you feel, discuss your worries and concerns – a problem shared often helps to relieve the burden and may help you think about your worries differently.
- Speak to your GP about *medication*. There are some medications that are considered to be helpful in pregnancy once the potential risks versus the benefits are evaluated.
- Consider some form of talking therapy, e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Counselling or local support groups.

Sources used to write this information sheet:

<http://babyworld.co.uk/2011/10/anxiety-in-pregnancy/>

<http://www.babycentre.co.uk/pregnancy/antenatalhealth/emotionalhealth/pregnancyblues/>