

Planning for Pregnancy WOMEN WITH DEPRESSION

Background

One in four women experiences a significant episode of depression during her lifetime. Women are almost twice as likely as men to experience depression. Depression is a treatable medical illness. There are safe, affordable, and effective ways to treat depression, such as a combination of counseling and medicine. It is important to recognize and treat depression before pregnancy. Women who have depression may not have the energy to seek help.

How Depression Affects Pregnancy

Up to one in five women have a mental illness during pregnancy. Depression may appear in the form of anxiety— anxiety disorders are more common during pregnancy. A woman who is depressed may not have the energy to take care of herself. She may feel confused over her feelings about pregnancy and her relationship with the baby's father.

How Pregnancy Affects Depression

Pregnancy is a time of intense emotion for most women. Women who have been depressed in the past are more likely to feel depressed during pregnancy. After the baby's birth they are more likely to experience postpartum depression, which may affect their ability to take care of themselves and their babies.

How Medications for Depression May Affect Pregnancy

Some antidepressant medications can be used safely during pregnancy. Talk with your health care provider before you become pregnant about the best medication and dose for you.

What You Can Do

- 1) Talk with your health care provider if you are thinking about becoming pregnant.*
- 2) Continue to take your antidepressant medication once you are pregnant. It is important for you and your baby.*
- 3) Talk to your health care provider to determine the best medication and dose for you during your pregnancy.*
- 4) Get immediate help if your depression gets worse.*
- 5) Find people who will give you the support you need during this time.*

Developed by the WAPC Preconception and Prenatal Care Committee, revised Oct. 2016
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This information is available on the WAPC Web site at www.perinatalweb.org.

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