



MDwise

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Pregnancy: How to Manage Depression

Some women become depressed during pregnancy. You are more likely to be depressed if you had depression in the past. Managing your depression will be important for your own health. But it will also help you to have a healthy baby.

If you are pregnant or become pregnant, talk to your doctor right away to discuss the treatment you are using for your depression. Depression can be treated during your pregnancy, but your treatment may need to be changed.

What are the symptoms of depression?

Depression affects people differently. You may feel hopeless and sad, or you may stop feeling pleasure from almost everything you do. You may feel "down in the dumps," tearful, or discouraged. You may also be grouchy or anxious or have low energy levels.

You may have other symptoms, such as:

- You lose weight or do not gain enough weight during your pregnancy.
- You sleep too much or not enough.
- You feel restless and unable to sit still, or you feel that moving takes a great effort.
- You feel tired all the time.
- You feel unworthy or guilty without reason.
- You have trouble concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.



- You think often about death or suicide.

Sometimes it is hard to know whether you have symptoms because you are pregnant or because you are depressed. Tell your doctor about your symptoms right away.

Can you get treatment during pregnancy?

If your depression is mild, you have several options for treatment, including medicine. Your doctor can tell you about other treatments such as counseling, light therapy, and exercise. These treatments have been shown to be very effective when combined with medicines, and sometimes they may be used instead of medicine.

If your depression is severe or if counseling alone is not enough, you may need medicine.

If you do not treat your depression, there is a

risk to you and your baby. You may not have the energy to take care of yourself when you are pregnant. You may not bond well with your baby after birth.

But with the right treatment, you can have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. Remember to discuss all treatment options with your doctor, so the two of you can decide which choice is best 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.

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:

- Your personal history of depression.
- Your risk of having the depression come back.
- The type of medicine you use to treat your depression.
- The safety of the medicine to the baby.
- The possible side effects for you.

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 3 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 3 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 drug.
- 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. These may have a bad reaction 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.