

Persons with Mental Health and Substance Use Conditions Who are Planning to Become Pregnant



Facts for Persons Planning to Become Pregnant

If you have mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety, or use substances such as tobacco or alcohol and plan to conceive, you should talk to your doctor before becoming pregnant or as soon as you learn that you are pregnant. Most people with mental health or substance use conditions have healthy babies, especially when they get the right treatment and care.

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 alcohol
- My current diagnosis of mental health conditions
- My life circumstances and concerns
- My goals for my mental health and well-being
- My pregnancy history (including the history of trying to get pregnant, infertility or pregnancy loss, and other medical complications)
- Any other medical conditions
- 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 me 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
- If any life changes happen during this pregnancy

What should I ask my provider?

- How will treatment for my mental health or substance use conditions help me?
- What mental health symptoms might I experience when I get pregnant?
- How do I know if I need therapy or other mental health treatment?
- What are the chances of my mental health condition getting worse?
- What are the risks and benefits of my current medications during pregnancy and breastfeeding?
- What risks are associated with not continuing my current medications or other treatments?
- What other medication or non-medication treatments might be helpful during my pregnancy?
- Are there any support groups you recommend that I join?
- Are there any resources that would be helpful, and who can help me find them?

Things to do

- Talk to your mental health and other healthcare providers once you start to plan a pregnancy or as soon as you learn that you are pregnant.
- Discuss how to prepare for your pregnancy with your mental health and other healthcare providers (e.g., primary care practitioner).
- 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
<https://www.psychiatry.org/>
 - National Institute on Mental Health
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>
 - National Institute on Drug Abuse
<https://nida.nih.gov/>

- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>
- Discuss your treatment options with your mental health and other healthcare providers. Any decision about your medications should be made carefully by you and your providers.
- When you first meet your pregnancy care team, let them know:
 - Your current and past mental health conditions.
 - What medicines, supplements, and other treatment approaches have been helpful.
- 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.
- Remember that getting the mental health treatment and support you need is the best thing you can do for yourself and your baby.
- If you have suicidal thoughts or concerns for your immediate safety, call 911.

Where to look for more information?

- MGH Center for Women's Mental Health
<https://womensmentalhealth.org/specialty-clinics-2/postpartum-psychiatric-disorders-2/>
- Postpartum Support International
<https://www.postpartum.net/>

- Mother2Baby
<https://mothertobaby.org/>
- National Maternal Mental Health Hotline
<https://mchb.hrsa.gov/national-maternal-mental-health-hotline>
- Hear Her Campaign | CDC
<https://www.cdc.gov/hearher/index.html>
- National Alliance for Mental Illness
<https://nami.org/Home>

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