Perinatal and Postpartum Depression: “Tips for Treatment”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Approved</th>
<th>09/04</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date Revised</td>
<td>07/06; 03/08; 1/10; 3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Reviewed</td>
<td>3/14, 3/16, 3/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Review Date</td>
<td>3/20</td>
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</table>
Key Points

General:

✓ Discuss risks, benefits and alternatives. Document this discussion and the patient’s consent to the treatment plan.

Depression:

✓ Depression is very common in women, especially in women of reproductive age. It is estimated that 14%-23% of pregnant women experience depression during pregnancy, and 5%-25% experience depression postpartum.

✓ Perinatal depression affects as many as one in seven women. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists all pregnant women be screened at least once during the perinatal period.

✓ Significant risk factors for perinatal depression include personal or family history of depression; discontinuation of antidepressant prior to or during pregnancy; poor social support; marital or relationship problems; ambivalence about the pregnancy.

✓ The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) has been 100% sensitive and 95.5% specific in detecting major postpartum depression at a threshold score higher than 13. Use of a formal screening tool significantly increases the detection rate of antenatal depression.

✓ Risks of untreated depression during pregnancy may include lack of follow through with prenatal care, inadequate weight gain, preterm birth, and difficulty bonding with the unborn baby.

✓ For mild or moderate depression, psychotherapy alone may be effective. In moderate to severe cases, treatment may include the use of antidepressant medications as well as counseling.

✓ Paroxetine use in pregnant women should be avoided, if possible.

✓ Postpartum psychosis usually occurs within hours to days of delivery. Incidence is 1 in 1,000 women overall, but 25-35% in women with a known history of bipolar disorder.
Information for Providers on Antidepressants During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding - September 2011

This chart is produced by the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Perinatal Mental Health Project as a summary of research on antidepressants in human pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Sources of data:

- **Pregnancy data**: Data summarized here are from controlled studies in human pregnancy. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Pregnancy Risk Categories, as found in the Physicians’ Desk Reference¹, are based on both animal and human studies. No antidepressants are yet specifically FDA-approved for use during pregnancy. All antidepressants cross the placenta, so there are none that are ‘Category A’ (“no risk”). Medications that are non-teratogenic in animal studies but have never been studied in humans are classified as ‘Category B’. Since teratogenicity does not generalize across species, a ‘Category B’ classification does not imply greater safety in human pregnancy than a ‘Category C’ or ‘D’ classification. Several medications have been shifted from ‘Category B’ to ‘Category C’ or ‘Category D’ as their risks became better known.

- **Breastfeeding data**: Data about antidepressant effects on breastfeeding babies are predominantly from case reports and case series. For medications with no reported side effects, that does not necessarily mean the medication is “safe”; often it means there are few case reports available. Reported percents of maternal dose to breastfeeding babies are weight-adjusted estimates that include the agent and its active metabolite(s).

*Specific references are available on request.

General guideline:

- Optimal treatment is based on individual patient characteristics and clinical judgment, especially weighing medication risks against risks of untreated illness. Risks of untreated perinatal depression may include preterm birth and other obstetric complications, increased risk of infection and difficult temperament in the infant, impaired parenting, and psychological effects such as impaired cognitive development, emotional and behavioral problems and increased reactivity to stress in children.

Antidepressants as a group may be associated with following risks:

- Increased risk of preterm birth and lower gestational age at birth, but without adverse effects on birth weight or Apgar scores
- Increased risk of miscarriage, but rates within norms of the general population.

SSRI antidepressants as a group (citalopram, escitalopram, fluoxetine, paroxetine, sertraline) may be associated with the following risks:

- Neonatal side effects, including respiratory distress, excessive crying, changes in sleep and behavioral state, difficulty sleeping, increased or decreased muscle tone, hyperreflexia, seizures, and/or cardiac arrhythmias
- Most studies have found no increased risk of gestational hypertension. One retrospective study² found a possible increased risk of gestational hypertension.
- Possible increased risk of persistent pulmonary hypertension in the newborn with exposure later in pregnancy.
- Most studies have found no increased risk of birth defects. One retrospective study³ found a possible increased risk of anencephaly, craniolens or omphalocele; another⁴ found an increased risk of anomalies in general, although absolute risks were small.
- Delay in lactation, however the delay was only for 14 hours on average.
- Kaiser Study showed 2-fold increased risk for Autism spectrum disorder with use of SSRI within one year of delivery and 3-fold increased risk with SSRI use in first trimester.

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### Information for Providers on Antidepressants during Pregnancy & Breast Feeding - September 2011

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Antidepressant</th>
<th>Advantages During Pregnancy</th>
<th>Teratogenicity</th>
<th>Other Disadvantages During Pregnancy</th>
<th>Estimated % of Maternal Dose to Breastfeeding Baby</th>
<th>Reported Side Effects to Breastfeeding Babies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bupropion</td>
<td>• Fewer sexual side effects • Less risk of weight gain • Helps with smoking cessation</td>
<td>Morphologic- limited evidence of cardiac malformations; increased risk for pulmonary hypertension Behavioral- limited evidence of increased risk of ADHD</td>
<td>• Limited data available • Lowers seizure threshold • Can cause insomnia • May increase risk of miscarriage</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>Seizures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citalopram</td>
<td>• Few interactions with other medications</td>
<td>Morphologic- risk of neural tube defect Behavioral- none found</td>
<td>• Limited data available</td>
<td>0.7% - 9.0%</td>
<td>Uneasy sleep, drowsiness, irritability, weight loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desipramine</td>
<td>• More studies in human pregnancy, including neurodevelopmental follow-up</td>
<td>Morphologic- none found Behavioral- none found</td>
<td>• Maternal side effects additive to pregnancy effects (sedation, constipation, tachycardia) • Orthostatic hypotension, risking decreased placental perfusion • Fetal and neonatal side effects: tachycardia, urinary retention</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>Agitation of newborn, potential triggering of seizure activity if there is a history of seizures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duloxetine</td>
<td>• Also treats diabetic peripheral neuropathic pain</td>
<td>Morphologic- unknown Behavioral- unknown</td>
<td>• No systematic studies in human pregnancy</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escitalopram</td>
<td>• Few interactions with other medications</td>
<td>Morphologic- unknown Behavioral- unknown</td>
<td>• No systematic studies in human pregnancy</td>
<td>3.9% - 7.9%</td>
<td>Enterocolitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluoxetine</td>
<td>• More studies in human pregnancy, including meta-analysis and neurodevelopmental follow-up</td>
<td>Morphologic- increased risk of cardiovascular malformations Behavioral- none found</td>
<td>• More reports of neonatal side effects than most other antidepressants</td>
<td>1.2% - 12.0%</td>
<td>Excessive crying, irritability, vomiting, watery stools, difficulty sleeping, tremor, somnolence, hypotonia, decreased weight gain, hyperglycemia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirtazapine</td>
<td>• Fewer sexual side effects • Helps restore appetite in women who are not gaining weight • Less likely to exacerbate nausea and vomiting</td>
<td>Morphologic- none found Behavioral- unknown</td>
<td>• Limited data available • Can cause excessive weight gain • Tends to be sedating • May increase risk of preterm birth</td>
<td>0.6% - 2.8%</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<td>Nortriptyline</td>
<td>• More studies in human pregnancy, including neurodevelopmental</td>
<td>Morphologic: none found</td>
<td>Maternal side effects additive to pregnancy effects (sedation, constipation, tachycardia)</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paroxetine</td>
<td>• Minimal association with cardiovascular malformations but may be</td>
<td>Morphologic: possible increased risk of cardiovascular</td>
<td>More reports of neonatal side effects than most other antidepressants ACOG recommends fetal echo for all exposed fetuses</td>
<td>0.1% - 4.3%</td>
<td>Irritability, sleepiness, constipation,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sertraline</td>
<td>• Relatively well-studied in human pregnancy</td>
<td>Morphologic: unlikely increased risk of omphalocele and septal</td>
<td>Minimal association with omphalocele and septal defects</td>
<td>0.4% - 2.3%</td>
<td>Drug of choice by OBs &amp; Pediatricians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venlafaxine</td>
<td>• None specific, but may be optimal for some individual</td>
<td>Morphologic: none found</td>
<td>Limited data available</td>
<td>5.2% - 7.6%</td>
<td>Decreased weight gain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desvenlafaxine</td>
<td>• None specific, but may be optimal for some individual</td>
<td>Morphologic: unknown</td>
<td>No systematic studies in human pregnancy</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Findings from one study at variance with other data, perhaps due to methodological flaws

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Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale\(^1\) (EPDS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Address:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Date of Birth:</td>
<td>Phone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby’s Date of Birth:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you are pregnant or have recently had a baby, we would like to know how you are feeling. Please check the answer that comes closest to how you have felt **IN THE PAST 7 DAYS**, not just how you feel today.

Here is an example, already completed.

I have felt happy:
- Yes, all the time  this would mean: “I have felt happy most of the time” during the past week.
- Yes, most of the time
- No, not very often
- No, not at all

Please complete the other questions in the same way.

**In the past 7 days:**

1. I have been able to laugh and see the funny side of things
   - As much as I always could
   - Not quite so much now
   - Definitely not so much now
   - Not at all

2. I have looked forward with enjoyment to things
   - As much as I ever did
   - Rather less than I used to
   - Definitely less than I used to
   - Hardly at all

3. I have blamed myself unnecessarily when things went wrong
   - Yes, most of the time
   - Yes, some of the time
   - Not very often
   - No, never

4. I have been anxious or worried for no good reason
   - No, not at all
   - Hardly ever
   - Yes, sometimes
   - Yes, very often

5. I have felt scared or panicky for no very good reason
   - Yes, quite a lot
   - Yes, sometimes
   - No, not much
   - No, not at all

6. Things have been getting on top of me
   - Yes, most of the time I haven’t been able to cope at all
   - Yes, sometimes I haven’t been coping as well as usual
   - No, most of the time I have coped quite well
   - No, I have been coping as well as ever

7. I have been so unhappy that I have had difficulty sleeping
   - Yes, most of the time
   - Yes, sometimes
   - Not very often
   - No, not much

8. I have felt sad or miserable
   - Yes, most of the time
   - Yes, quite often
   - Not very often
   - No, not at all

9. I have been so unhappy that I have been crying
   - Yes, most of the time
   - Yes, quite often
   - Only occasionally
   - No, never

10. The thought of harming myself has occurred to me
    - Yes, quite often
    - Sometimes
    - Hardly ever
    - Never

Administered/Reviewed by __________________________________________  Date __________________________

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Instructions for Using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale\(^1\) (EPDS)

The 10-question Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) is a valuable and efficient way of identifying patients at risk for perinatal depression.

- It is a proven screening tool.
- It is easy to administer.
- It can be completed at home and brought to a physician’s office (OB, Pediatric, Family Practice) or the office of a mental health practitioner.
- It can also be downloaded in the medical setting.

The scale indicates how the woman has felt \textit{during the previous week}.

It may be useful to repeat the screen in 2 weeks in questionable cases.

The EPDS score should \textit{inform} but not override clinical judgment as a complete and thoughtful clinical assessment should be carried out to confirm the diagnosis.

Instructions for using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale:

1. Ask the woman to check the response that comes closest to how she has been feeling in the previous 7 days.
2. All items must be completed.
3. The mother should complete the scale herself, unless she has limited English or has difficulty with reading. She should not discuss her answers with others.

SCORING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A score of greater than 13 as a threshold value is:</th>
<th>Responses are scored 0, 1, 2, or 3 according to increased severity of symptom. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are reverse scored (i.e., 3, 2, 1, and 0). The total score is determined by adding together the scores for each of the 10 items.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100% sensitive, 95.5% specific for PPD(^2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible Depression: 10 or greater</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always look at item #10 for suicidal thoughts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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References


The University of Illinois at Chicago Perinatal Mental Health Project. *Information for Clinicians on Antidepressants during Pregnancy & Breastfeeding- September 2011.*


Resources


The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [http://www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org)


Massachusetts Child Psychiatry Access Project (MCPAP) for Moms Toolkit available at [https://www.mcpapformoms.org/Toolkits/Toolkit.aspx](https://www.mcpapformoms.org/Toolkits/Toolkit.aspx)


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