



Maternity Unit

Information for women taking antidepressants during pregnancy and when breastfeeding

This leaflet is for women who are taking antidepressants and/or medication for anxiety (also called *anxiolytics*) while pregnant, or after the birth of their baby.

Carrying a baby and giving birth can be a challenging time and can significantly impact your emotional and physical wellbeing. For most women it is important to continue to take their antidepressant or anxiety medication as prescribed.

If you take antidepressant medication and your GP or midwife have identified you as being low risk, you will only receive care by your midwife and you will not be referred to a specialist consultant. You will also be encouraged to have your baby in the birthplace of your choice, which can be at home or in hospital.

Inside the womb:

Inside your womb, some of the antidepressant medication that you take is passed onto your baby. Your baby then gets used to the level of medication that you are taking. Most babies of mothers taking antidepressants will not have any problems after birth, but some babies may be a little unsettled during the first few days of life as they adjust to no longer receiving antidepressants through the womb. Some new born babies can also be a bit jittery or easily startled and may need more feeding. They may also need more cuddles and settling than usual. Rarely, use of antidepressants in pregnancy may require your baby to be admitted to the neonatal unit for observation. In order to know which babies may need this extra level of care, it is important for you to watch for any of the signs listed below:

- Skin colour becomes pale grey or blue rather than pink.
- Unusual movements, such as jerking.
- Struggling to breathe or unusual breathing. For example, your baby begins to breathe quickly and inhale deeply, which causes the ribs to become more visible, and/or your baby starts making a grunting noise.
- Flaring nostrils while breathing.

If your baby displays any of the symptoms listed above, please seek medical advice immediately. If you are at home we recommend calling for an ambulance on 999.

If there are any signs or symptoms not mentioned above but you are worried about your baby, please discuss them with your midwife or GP.

Breastfeeding:

We would encourage you to breast feed your baby as you continue to take your antidepressant or anxiety medication. Since only very small amounts of the medication pass into your breast milk; it is unlikely to affect your baby. Breast feeding can help you bond with your baby as skin to skin contact helps to improve your mental wellbeing. If you are taking other medications please discuss this with your midwife or GP as some medications are not advised while breastfeeding.

Contact Numbers:

We hope that you have found this information useful. If you have any questions or are worried about anything, please speak to the following Dorset County Hospital Staff:

Postnatal Midwives: 01305 254245
Perinatal Mental Health Midwives: 07795541529

Useful Websites:

Association for Postnatal Illness: Charity that provides a telephone helpline, information leaflets and a network of volunteers who have experience in postnatal depression.

- www.apni.org
- Telephone helpline: 02073 860868

Mind: Charity that provides information, support and understanding for people who suffer with depression and for relatives who want to help. Mind also offers self-help groups, information and raising awareness for depression.

- www.mind.org.uk/
- Telephone helpline: 03001 233393
- Text messaging service: 86463
- e-mail: information@depressionalliance.org

The Breastfeeding Network: Information and support for breastfeeding.

- Telephone helpline: 03001 000212
- <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/>

About this leaflet:

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If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email pals@dchft.nhs.uk



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