

Baby information: for mothers who take medication to support their mental health in pregnancy

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I need to take medication for my mental health during pregnancy – what does this mean when my baby is born?

Women need to take medication for many different physical and mental health problems during pregnancy. You have been given this patient information leaflet as you and your doctor decided that it would be safest for you to take medication for your mental health during pregnancy. These may be antidepressants, antipsychotics and/or anti-anxiety medications. Most of these medications do not require your baby to have observations when they are born, however some do. Your healthcare professional (midwife or doctor) will inform you if your baby does require observations. Some babies can experience symptoms after birth because of these medicines. You should not worry about this – even if babies do develop symptoms these usually settle down within a few days without the need for any treatment.

Do I need to do anything when I am pregnant?

- Make sure you tell the people involved in your care what medication you are taking.
- Do not stop or make changes to your medication without talking to your doctor first.
- Take medication regularly and make sure you do not run out – if this happens make sure you talk to your GP or Psychiatrist about what to do.
- Your doctor will tell you about any symptoms your baby might experience.

If my baby needs observations, what will they be?

- The Healthcare Professional will check your baby just after birth to make sure that he/she is not experiencing any physical health problems.
- They will check how alert your baby is and look for any signs of irritability or distress, testing his/her movements for any stiffness or floppiness as well as listening to the baby's heart and lungs.
- The Healthcare Professional will also ask if you have any worries about your baby's wellbeing, including how he/she is settling, feeding and sleeping.
- The check will take around 10 minutes and is not harmful or painful for your baby.
- During the check the Healthcare Professional will talk to you about any concerns they find with your baby and whether these are due to medication or other causes. They will explain any investigations or treatment needed.

- If you are taking more than one medication in pregnancy or one of the medications that require your baby to be observed, a referral will be made to the paediatrician, and they will put a plan in place for your baby. This will state the minimum length of time Healthcare Professionals will observe your baby for. Please note: You may not be seen by the paediatrician however you will receive a letter regarding the plan of care for your baby.
- Many medications are also safe to take while breastfeeding, the health care professionals involved with your care will inform you if the medication you are taking is less suitable for breastfeeding and may discuss changing it with you.

Who should I speak to if I'm worried about my baby's health?

If you are worried about your baby, speak to your GP, midwife or health visitor. If your baby is less than 6 weeks old, you can contact maternity care 24/7. The numbers to call are in your Baby's Health Record (the red book).

If at any time your baby appears unwell, drowsy or has feeding difficulties you should see your GP or take him/her to A&E.

Further information about medications in pregnancy can be found at:

BUMPS (Best use of Medicines in Pregnancy): www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/
Royal College of Psychiatrists:
www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/mentalhealthinpregnancy.aspx

Maternity

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If you require this information in another language or alternative format, please email the Patient Information team at ulth.patient.information@nhs.net