

Complementary Treatment Options for Perinatal Depression/Anxiety

Thyroid Tests

About 10% of women will have a thyroid disorder during the postpartum period. Thyroid disorders can cause anxiety and depression. A thyroid test (free T4, TSH, anti-TPO, anti-thyroglobulin) is recommended between three months and six months postpartum if symptoms of depression or anxiety are present.

Nutrition

Deficiencies in major vitamins and minerals can cause symptoms of depression and anxiety. Continue to take a high-quality food-based prenatal vitamin and ask your healthcare provider to test your vitamin D levels as low levels of this hormone can greatly influence mood. **Omega-3 fatty acids** in the form of fish oil are proven to help prevent and treat anxiety and depression. Up to 1000-3000 combined mg of EPA and DHA have been shown safe for pregnant women. Your provider may recommend up to 9000 mg.

Support Groups

Social support in various forms has been shown to both prevent and mitigate the symptoms of PPD/anxiety. For a list of local support groups see, www.utahmmhc.com and for nationwide support groups contact Postpartum Support International at www.postpartum.net or 805-967-7636.

Psychotherapy

It is very important that a mother with symptoms of perinatal mood or anxiety disorders seek treatment from a therapist who specializes in treating pregnant and postpartum women or who is willing to get educated about these issues. The postpartum mother should ask the therapist what type of therapy the person would use. Research has shown that cognitive-behavioral and interpersonal psychotherapies are the most effective modalities to treat postpartum depression.

Acupuncture & bright light therapy are also effective treatments for mild to moderate depression in pregnant and postpartum women. **St. John's Wort**, has been shown to be effective in treating mild to moderate symptoms in postpartum women but warrants further research on safety during pregnancy. Ask your care provider for more information.

Postpartum doula care, exercise, massage, homeopathic remedies, chiropractic, yoga, hypnotherapy, and nutritional support are all being studied for effectiveness in prevention and treatment and are often helpful options for women to consider as they tailor a treatment plan unique to them. Women should always check with their healthcare provider for safety, as some herbs and illegal drugs can cause serious damage to both mother and infant. Often alternative therapies can complement counseling and/or medication when provided by a licensed healthcare professional.