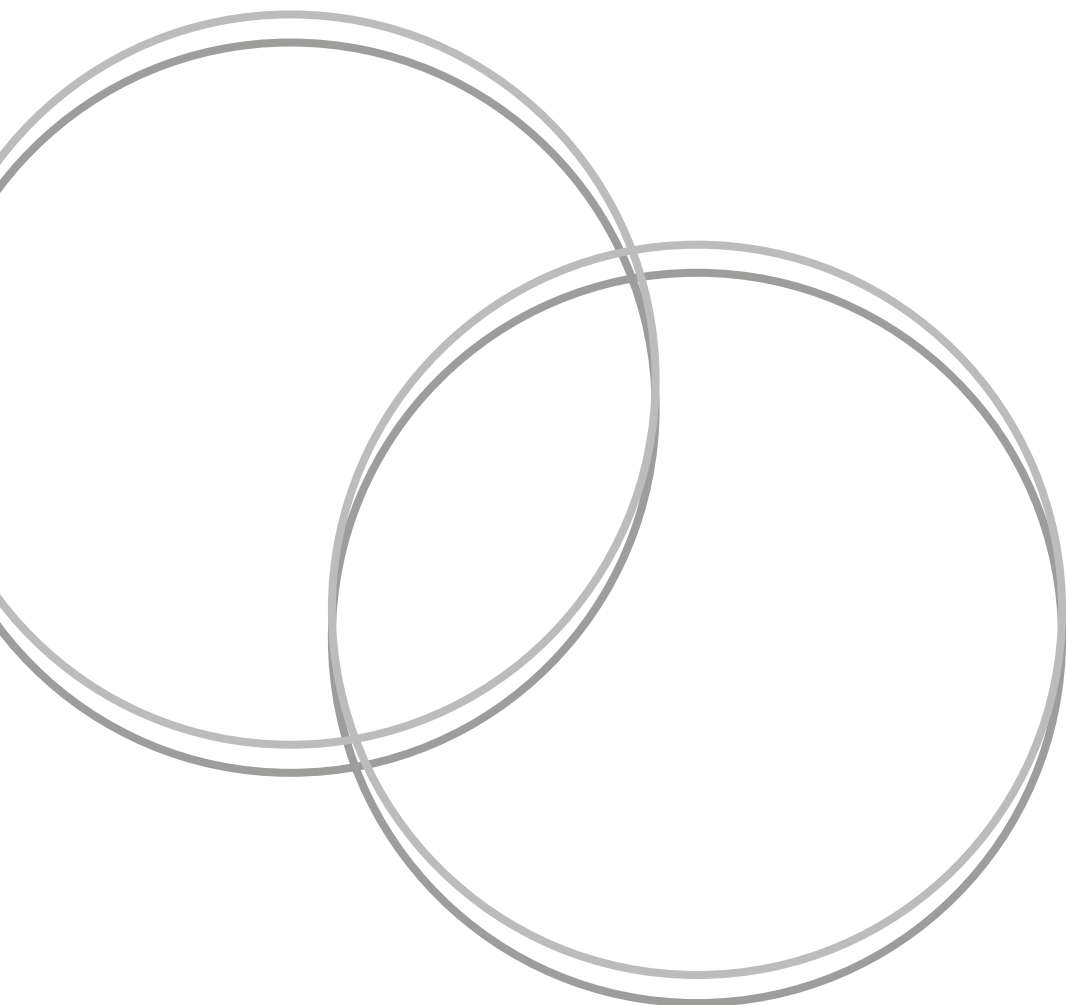


Medication for mental health and the care of your newborn baby

Information leaflet



Taking medication for mental health during pregnancy

People take medication during pregnancy for many different reasons, including for mental health.

The decision to start or continue medication (such as **antidepressants, antipsychotics or anti-anxiety medication**) to support or protect mental health during pregnancy should be taken after a **discussion with your doctor**.

A common challenge is balancing the potential impact of medication on the baby, compared with the benefit of maintaining stable mental health.

During pregnancy

No additional observations are needed for your baby if you are taking medication for mental health.

You may need additional observations to support or protect your mental health – your midwife and/or doctor will explain these to you.

In the postnatal period

After your baby is born, they may need some additional, non-invasive observations.

These observations vary depending on which medications you are taking. For some medications, we need to review your baby once a day for three days after birth. We will talk to you about whether these reviews need to be done in the hospital, or if they could be done at home or in your local community midwife centre.

If at any time, you or the health care professionals caring for you, have any concerns about your baby, we will offer additional checks and reviews.

While you are pregnant

Make sure you tell your midwife and/or doctor which medication you are taking.

Don't stop or make any changes to your medication without talking to your doctor first.

Take your medication regularly and try to ensure you don't run out. If you do run out, talk to your GP, pharmacist or psychiatric doctor about what to do.

If your medication or dose changes, make sure to inform the healthcare professionals caring for you.

After giving birth

If you or the healthcare professionals caring for you have any concerns, we will monitor your baby more closely.

Symptoms

Your doctor, psychiatrist or midwife will tell you about any symptoms your baby might experience, and what to look out for after they are born.

Most babies who experience symptoms require no medical interventions – the symptoms are generally mild and resolve on their own.

Because different medications affect all bodies differently, symptoms can appear as early as 1 day after birth but may not appear until later.

Symptoms may last from 72 hours to around 2 weeks, either as one prolonged period or as separate episodes.

If your baby does develop symptoms you may need to stay in hospital for a period of time after giving birth for some observations to be carried out.

Signs to look out for

If you have any concerns about your baby or observe any of the signs below, contact your midwife or GP as soon as possible.

These include:

- **drowsiness**
- **jitteriness** (shaking, or unable to rest or sleep)
- **poor sucking / feeding** – your baby may lack interest in feeding or not feed regularly (they should be feeding **at least** 6 to 8 times a day)
- **vomiting** large amounts of feed regularly and/or their vomit is green in colour
- **diarrhoea**
- **increased muscle tone** or muscle stiffness
- **pale** in colour.

Signs that your baby is seriously ill

Call an ambulance if your baby:

- is **floppy** when you pick them up
- feels **hot** (with a temperature of 38°C and above)
- feels **cold** (with a temperature of 36°C or below)
- has **difficulty breathing**, is breathing fast, grunting while breathing, or working hard to breathe (this may look like they are sucking their stomach in under their ribs)
- has a **high-pitched or weak cry**.

How you can help your baby

- Stay calm and attend to your baby quickly.
- Use skin-to-skin contact or close cuddling to soothe them.
- Keep the environment as quiet and dark as possible.
- Handle them gently and slowly (avoid bouncing).
- Responsive feeding.
- Avoid strong smells such as perfumes, cooking smells and cleaning products.

You can ask for help or advice from your midwife, GP or health visitor. They will be happy to support you.

Further information

Bumps – Best use of medicine in pregnancy

www.medicinesinpregnancy.org

NHS – Is your baby or toddler seriously ill?

www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/health/is-your-baby-or-toddler-seriously-ill

Royal College of Psychiatrists – Planning a Pregnancy

www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/treatments-and-wellbeing/planning-a-pregnancy

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

We would like to thank the Oxfordshire Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership for their contribution to the development of this leaflet.

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