

Managing Stress & Anxiety During Pregnancy

WHAT IS STRESS AND ANXIETY IN PREGNANCY?

Pregnancy brings big changes, and sometimes big feelings. Stress refers to the pressures or worries of everyday life (job, finances, family), while anxiety includes persistent worry, fear, or nervousness that may interfere with daily life. During pregnancy, these feelings are common and deserve attention.

The CDC notes that anxiety disorders are common before, during, and after pregnancy.

💠 WHY IT MATTERS

Untreated stress and anxiety during pregnancy are linked to risks such as preterm birth and low birth weight. Also, anxiety during pregnancy may lead to mood or anxiety disorders after birth. Recognizing and managing these feelings early helps both you and your baby.

❤️ SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- Worry or fear that won't go away
- Trouble sleeping or staying asleep
- Feeling on edge, restless, or irritable
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Physical symptoms (racing heart, shortness of breath, headaches)



❤️ ***If you notice these and they're affecting your daily life, speak with your prenatal provider—they can help.***

HEALTHY HABITS TO MANAGE STRESS & ANXIETY

Putting some tools into place now can make a difference:

- **Build your support network.** Talk with friends, family, or join a prenatal group. Social support reduces stress.
- **Move your body safely.** Gentle exercise—walking, prenatal yoga, swimming—can help your mood and your stress response. Always check with your provider first.
- **Try relaxation practices.** Deep breathing, meditation, guided imagery, and mindfulness have shown benefits in reducing prenatal stress.
- **Make sleep and rest a priority.** Lack of sleep adds stress—take naps, stick to a bedtime routine, create a calm environment.
- **Set realistic expectations.** Pregnancy is a big transition. It's okay to ask for help, simplify your schedule, and say no to things that overwhelm you.
- **Talk about your worries.** Whether it's childbirth, finances, or being a parent—share your thoughts with your provider, partner, or a trusted friend.
- **Professional help is okay and helpful.** If anxiety feels unmanageable or you have panic attacks, talk to your provider about whether therapy or other supports are appropriate.

HEART AFTER BABY ARRIVES

The feelings you have now can continue after birth. Your risk for postpartum anxiety or depression is higher if you've had significant stress or anxiety during pregnancy. Keep healthy habits going. Don't hesitate to ask for help postpartum—screening for mood and anxiety disorders is recommended.



WHEN TO SEEK HELP QUICKLY

Call or visit your provider right away if you:

- Have thoughts of harming yourself or your baby.
- Experience panic attacks or overwhelming fear
- Feel unable to function or care for yourself or baby
- Use alcohol, drugs or prescription medications to cope

Remember: mental health is just as important as physical health in pregnancy.



WHERE TO LEARN MORE

CDC – Anxiety & Depression in Pregnancy:
cdc.gov/maternal-infant-health/pregnancy-complications

NICHD – Stress during Pregnancy

NIMH – Perinatal Depression & Anxiety