

Stress during pregnancy and postpartum



Prevention and Health Education Unit
Prepared by Licensed Health Educators

Objectives

To know what stress is.



To identify signs of stress during pregnancy and postpartum.

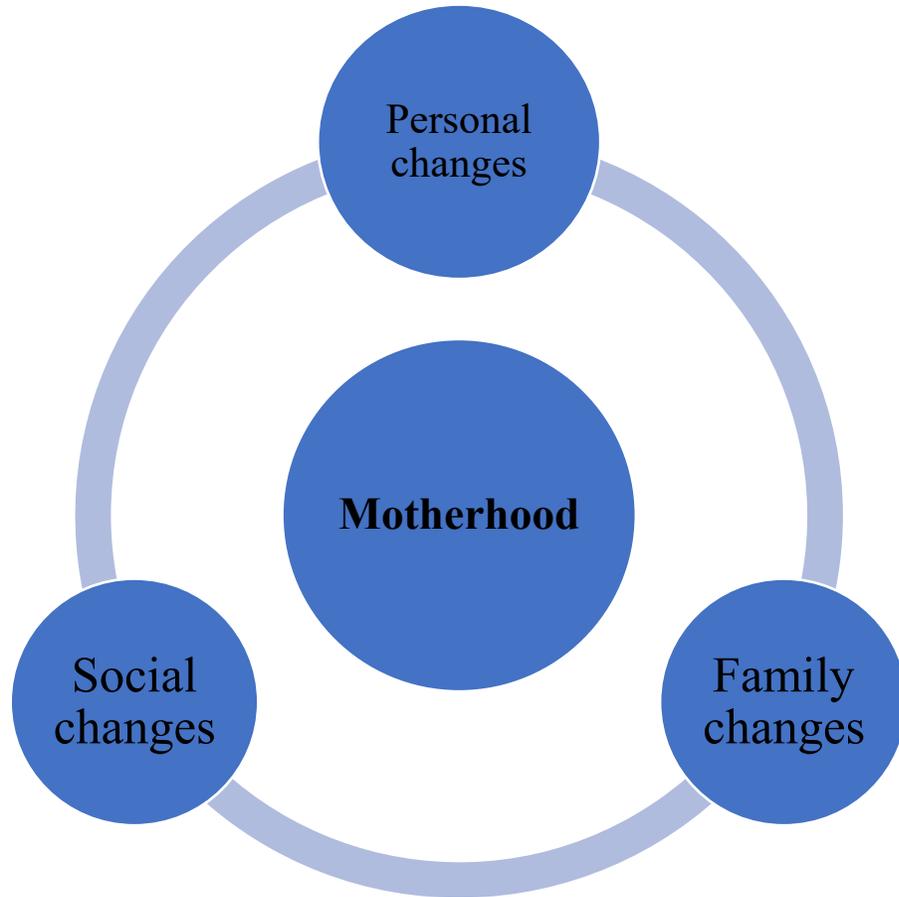
To mention strategies for managing stress during pregnancy and childbirth.

What is stress?

- Stress is a feeling of physical or emotional tension. It can occur from any situation or thought that makes one feel frustrated, angry, or nervous.
- It is your body's reaction to a challenge or demand. In small episodes, stress can be positive, for example, when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline. However, when stress lasts for a long time, it can harm your health.



What can cause stress?



- Physical discomfort and other changes in daily life can cause stress during pregnancy and postpartum.
- Some types of stress can cause serious health problems, such as high blood pressure or premature birth.

Motherhood

- From the moment a woman finds out she is pregnant; a series of emotional and psychological changes begins.
- In a detailed description, Daniel Stern, author of the book “The Birth of a Mother,” explores aspects of motherhood that coincide with the process. Motherhood is a process that occurs in stages, beginning with pregnancy and completing after childbirth and the first months of care.
- The body is responsible for the physical formation of the fetus; the mind is responsible for the idea of the mother she will become.





Stress During Pregnancy

How can stress affect your pregnancy?

- Feeling stressed is common during pregnancy because it is a time of many changes, such as in your family life, your body, and your emotions. You may welcome those changes, but they can add more stress to your life.
- High levels of stress that are maintained for a long time can lead to health problems, such as high blood pressure and heart disease.



Effects of stress during pregnancy in a baby

- Short-term effects:
 - Low birth weight.
 - Born before the 35th week of gestation, premature.
- Medium-term effects:
 - Lower levels of cognitive development.
 - A more delayed motor development.
- Long-term effects, in adulthood:
 - Higher stress levels.
 - Increased risk of psychological disorders.



Causes

- Pregnancy discomforts, such as nausea, constipation, tiredness, or back pain.
- Your hormones are changing, which can affect your mood.
- Feeling worried about childbirth or how to care for your baby.
- Think about how to handle job responsibilities.
- You may be concerned about what you eat, drink, and feel, and how these things affect your baby.

Symptoms

Nervousness or irritability

Fatigue

Lack of concentration

Headaches, nausea, stomach
pain

Trouble sleeping

Techniques to manage stress during pregnancy

- Know that pregnancy discomforts are only temporary. Ask your doctor how to manage them.
 - Maintain your health and fitness. Eat healthy foods, get enough sleep, and be physically active if you have your OB-GYN's approval. Exercise can help reduce stress and help prevent common pregnancy discomforts.
 - Try relaxation activities, such as prenatal yoga or meditation.
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Techniques to manage stress during pregnancy

- Take a childbirth education class so you will know what to expect during pregnancy and when your baby arrives.
- If you work, prepare in advance so that both you and your employer are organized for your absence from work.
- Spend any free time you have relaxing.



Support Network



- Create a good network support including your partner, family and/or friends.
- Find out what's causing you stress and talk about it with your partner, friend, family member, or medical professional.
- If you think you may have depression or anxiety, talk to your healthcare provider right away. Starting treatment early is important for you and your baby's health.
- Ask people you trust for help. Accept help when it is offered. For example, you may need help to clean the house or if you want someone as accompany to your prenatal visits.

A close-up photograph of a woman in a teal hospital gown holding a newborn baby. The baby is wrapped in a light-colored blanket and has its eyes closed. The background is a blurred hospital room with medical equipment. A white, brushstroke-style graphic is overlaid across the center of the image, containing the text 'Postpartum stress' in a dark blue, serif font.

Postpartum stress

Postpartum stress

- Having stress and anxiety after childbirth is more common than you think.
- Postpartum stress is the response of the mother's body after childbirth. It is caused by the changes produced by the arrival of a baby at home. The baby needs all the attention 24 hours a day, and this can generate anxiety.



Postpartum stress



- Babies recognize the smells or voices of their parents, so when a mother finds herself in a stressful situation, the baby mirrors her response and causes its heart rate to increase.
- The more stress the mother shows, the more stressed the baby will be. Likewise, the symptoms the mother experiences can affect the baby, so it's essential that she take a moment to relax before holding them in her arms.

Symptoms

Anxiety

Isolation

Uncontrolled eating

Frustration and crying

Trouble sleeping

Techniques to manage stress during the postpartum period

1. **Take care of your diet.** Eat nutritious foods and never skip mealtimes, especially if you're breastfeeding.
2. **Try to sleep.** It is complicated, but you must take advantage of the moments when the baby is asleep to rest. Adapt to the newborn's schedule.
3. **Delegate to your support network.** It doesn't have to be a supermom; remember that your partner should also take care of the little one. This will help you release stress and recover quickly.
4. **Don't put your life aside.** It's true that it will be difficult to leave the house without your baby, but it's necessary, especially when the first few months have passed. Going for a walk without the baby can be a good option, especially if your stress level is quite high. Take the opportunity to meet friends and catch up.

However, if after putting these tips into practice the situation continues, go to a specialist.



Postpartum Sadness "*Baby Blues*"

- Postpartum sadness is present in approximately 80% of mothers.
- It is not pathological; it is due to hormonal, social, and psychological changes and lasts up to 2-3 weeks.
- It is characterized by crying, feelings of vulnerability, decay.
- She remits on her own and benefits from social and family support.



Postpartum anxiety

If you're feeling overwhelmed by worry, can't sleep, or feel constantly nervous, you could be suffering from a postpartum mood disorder known as postpartum anxiety (PPA). PPA is defined as excessive feelings of worry and panic that disrupt your daily life. Symptoms of PPA can include involuntary and/or persistent thoughts that make it difficult to care for yourself and your baby.

- ✓ You should see a mental health professional to determine if you have postpartum stress, postpartum blues, postpartum anxiety, postpartum depression, or postpartum psychosis.



When to seek help?

- If you feel sad, anxious, or overwhelmed, or if you feel like you can't love or care for your baby after childbirth and these feelings last for more than 2 weeks, you may be experiencing postpartum depression. It is important to recognize these symptoms in time to receive the right support and help.
- Some of the common symptoms include:

Feeling angry or grumpy

Feeling sad or hopeless

Feeling guilty, ashamed, and worthless

Eating more or less than usual

Sleeping more or less than usual

Unusual crying or sadness

Loss of interest, joy, or pleasure in things you used to enjoy

Withdrawing from friends and family

Possible thoughts of hurting the baby or yourself.



When to seek help?

- Working with a mental health professional, along with the support of your family members, is a great way to develop an appropriate treatment plan to work with mental health during pregnancy and postpartum.
- Your mental health professional may prescribe medication and recommend different strategies to help you recover. Among them are support groups, practicing self-care through rest, regular physical activity, and maintaining a balanced diet.



References:

- <https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003211.htm>
 - <https://nacersano.marchofdimes.org/embarazo/estres.aspx>
 - <https://www.natalben.com/embarazo-estres-como-afecta-embarazada-bebe>
 - <https://www.enfamil.es/blogs/ser-madre/estres-postparto-sintomas-como-evitarlo>
 - <https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007215.htm>
 - https://www.babycenter.com/baby/postpartum-health/postpartum-anxiety_40009374
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Social and Emotional Aspect

For tips, tools, and resources on how you and your family can cope with the emotional and physical concerns that arise during and after your medical treatment, please visit your primary care physician or call the following phone lines.



Available Service Lines

Medical Advice Line

24 hours a day / 7 days a week

1-844-647-7801

TTY/TDD: 1-844-347-7804

Customer Service

1-844-347-7800

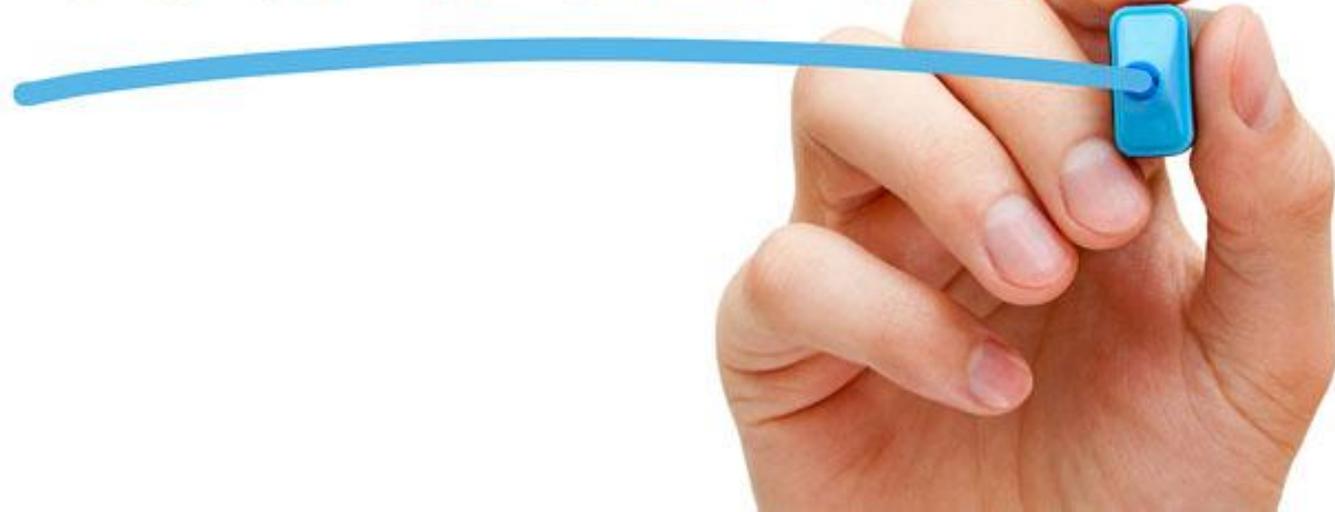
TTY/TDD: 1-844-347-7805



Questions?



THANK YOU



¿Ayuda con su Plan de Salud del Gobierno?



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