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Prevention of postpartum psychiatric disorders



To ensure better outcomes for both mothers and infants, **screening for postpartum mental illnesses** much earlier for early detection and intervention can be very useful.

There are universal screening programs during pregnancy and the postpartum phase to detect these problems such as the Patient Health Questionnaire (**PHQ-9**) or Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (**EPDS**), they should be part of routine maternal care. Routine screening of such practices into motherhood improves mental health among mothers, reduces stigma, and provides timely support.



When to screen?

During the postpartum phase, NICE guidelines suggest consulting all women about their mood at least twice.

What questions shall be asked?

- Have you been feeling sad, hopeless, or depressed in the last month?
- Have you been lacking interest or enjoyment in activities over the past month?

If answered yes, it doesn't mean that the diagnosis is made, however it only points to the possibility that something could be wrong, and it is advised to visit your general practitioner or psychiatrist. After NICE questions you can use Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) to investigate further.



How to prevent Baby blues?

To promote the well-being of mothers and minimize the occurrence of baby blues, it is advisable to adopt a planned strategy.

- Education programs could make new mothers aware of the likely difficulties they may face in the postpartum stage such as constant fatigue, changes in hormone levels and changes in lifestyle, while also encouraging them to maintain proper sleep, manage stress, and form social bonds.
- Reassurance, encouragement, and exposure to groups that relate to infant care and feeding and settling babies can help alleviate anxiety and enhance self-assurance.



How to prevent Baby blues?

- Consistency in contacting the healthcare providers would address the emotional aspect of the patients and intervene, when necessary, at an earlier stage.
- omega-3 fatty acids, more specifically EPA and DHA, are proven to lower the incidence of baby blues as well as.



How to prevent postpartum depression?

To prevent postpartum depression, we encourage that standard and proven interventions be applied to high-risk women.

As per the recommendations of the US Preventative Task Force (USPSTF), a more universal screening approach during pregnancy along with postpartum period would assist in identifying women who are at a higher risk of suffering from PPD.



How to prevent postpartum depression?

Preventive measures should incorporate the use of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and interpersonal therapy (IPT); both of whose efficacy in reducing the risk of PPD is estimated.

Furthermore, easily accessible mechanisms like Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and peer support and educational based programs can also be effective.

With these integrative strategies in place, it would be possible to prevent PPD as well as enhance maternal mental health.



How to prevent postpartum psychosis?

Women with a history of postpartum psychosis or bipolar disorder have a greater risk of postpartum psychiatric illness. The use of lithium prophylaxis is effective in reducing the risk of relapse of psychosis. It is recommended to initiate lithium only after delivery to minimize medication exposure during pregnancy while preventing postpartum relapse.



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Reviewed By:

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