



RCM Clinical Guidance Briefing Perinatal Mental Health Care During Covid -19

Topic
Identifying, caring for and supporting women at risk of or with /pre-existing Perinatal Mental Health problems during Covid-19 epidemic
Potential impact of Covid-19 on the mental health and wellbeing of pregnant and new mothers.
<p>Perinatal mental health problems are common. Up to one in five women will experience poor mental health in the perinatal period. Without prompt and effective treatment, the negative impact of perinatal mental health problems can have serious consequences for both the woman and her family.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has created a challenging climate for pregnant and postpartum women. The unknown of pregnancy and motherhood is a psychological trigger for many, and the lack of certainty surrounding the COVID-19 situation is likely to cause considerable anxiety.</p> <p>As a result, all women, and particularly vulnerable women (for example, those with underlying health conditions), are likely to be more susceptible to perinatal mental health conditions.</p> <p>It is important to be mindful of the additional stress women are likely to be experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, women may not have access to family or peer support networks.</p> <p>For many women with existing perinatal mental health conditions, establishing a routine is stabilising. However, as a result of COVID-19, many women would have been required to change their routine. Women may have children who aren't at school, they can't go to cafes or see friends to socialise and seek peer support.</p> <p>It is vitally important to check how women are feeling mentally, be mindful of the language you use, and be direct.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask, 'how are you feeling mentally about COVID-19?'. Ask direct questions and don't assume women will talk to you when they feel vulnerable.• Particularly where women have existing problems with anxiety, acknowledge that it is reasonable to be anxious and recognise the fact that there are many things currently outside of their control.• Women might worry about burdening an already pressured NHS by seeking help for mental health problems, emphasize the importance of seeking help to safeguard their own wellbeing.• Acknowledging that midwives are busy and mostly hurried at this time; it is important to provide time and space for women to talk about their fears e.g. the possibility of home birth or having to stay inside for months before the baby arrives.• Follow established care/referral pathways for women with pre-existing mental health conditions.• Identify and refer women with new/emerging mental health problems as appropriate.• Signpost women to credible sources of digital/online support.

Current key guidance for this topic – clinical care and advice for women

<https://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/CG192>

https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/improving-care/nccmh/perinatal/nccmh-the-perinatal-mental-health-care-pathways-full-implementation-guidance.pdf?sfvrsn=73c19277_2

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/statements/statement-physical-and-mental-health-key-to-resilience-during-covid-19-pandemic>

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_8

Maternal Emotional Wellbeing and Infant Development , RCM, London

<https://www.rcm.org.uk/media/2342/maternal-emotional-wellbeing.pdf>

References and links to online and virtual support and guidance

<https://www.app-network.org/news/postpartum-psychosis-covid-19/>

<https://smalltimemum1.wordpress.com/2020/03/31/support-when-mums-need-it-most-perinatal-mental-health-support-during-covid-19-and-beyond/>

<https://maternalocd.org/resources/>

https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-how-to-stop-the-anxiety-spiralling-out-of-control-133166?utm_medium=amptwitter&utm_source=twitter

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1732740973652517/> .

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51873799>

<https://ocdaction.org.uk/articles/covid-19>

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/k7exqm/how-to-deal-with-coronavirus-if-you-have-ocd-or-anxiety?utm_content=1583420671&utm_medium=social&utm_source=VICE_twitter

RCM i-learn

Perinatal mental health - <https://www.ilearn.rcm.org.uk/course/view.php?id=628>

Nurturing infant mental health - <https://www.ilearn.rcm.org.uk/course/view.php?id=369>