



ARC Mental Health Information Series

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Prenatal Depression

One of the most hidden mental illnesses is also one of the most common. Around 7% of women will experience prenatal depression. It is believed that the rapid increase of hormones during pregnancy can disrupt brain chemistry, resulting in depression. If the depression remains untreated, it can have direct impact on the child including low birth weight, premature birth and developmental problems



- Untreated perinatal mental health issues can lead to chronic depression.
- Suicide is the 4th leading cause of maternal death in Canada.
- 2018 meta-analysis of prenatal depression studies that looked at children's development up to age 18 concluded that in addition to depression, children may also be at higher risk for anxiety and behavioural problems.

Symptoms

Prenatal depression symptoms are similar to those of generalized depression however can be framed around awaiting a new baby

- Persistent sadness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Loss of interest in activities you typically enjoy
- Anxiety
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Change in eating habits
- Recurring thoughts of death, suicide, or hopelessness

