



introduction

Why this guide was created	2
The BC Reproductive Mental Health Program	2
Who is this guide for?	3
How to use this guide	4
Getting started	4
We're looking for feedback	5
Disclaimer	5
Acknowledgments	5



introduction

WHY THIS GUIDE WAS CREATED

This guide was created to help meet the needs of women who are dealing with anxiety during pregnancy and following the birth of their baby.

Our goals are to:

1. Educate women and health care providers about the signs and symptoms of anxiety before and following the birth.
2. Educate women and health care providers on the different available and effective treatments.
3. Help women to become active participants in their own treatment and recovery, by learning and using specific effective coping skills and making positive lifestyle changes.

THE BC REPRODUCTIVE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

is a multidisciplinary group consisting of psychiatrists, nurse clinicians, counsellors, dieticians, social workers and researchers who specialize in women's reproductive mental health and wellbeing. Together, we have many years of experience working with women and their families who are dealing with emotional difficulties related to the reproductive lifecycle. We bring a wide range of skills to the preparation of this guide, including both clinical and research experience. The BC Reproductive Mental Health Program is part of BC Mental Health & Addiction Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, and is located at BC Children's Hospital & BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre site in Vancouver, Canada.



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WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

FOR WOMEN: This guide was created to help women who are dealing with anxiety during pregnancy and following the birth of their baby. It includes educational information that may be worked through gradually. We hope that it will help you to better manage symptoms by making changes in your thinking, behavior and self-care to support a more positive experience during pregnancy and following the birth.

You may find it helpful to work through the guide with a healthcare provider.

“Supported Self-Help” involves regular appointments with a healthcare professional who provides support and structure when using resources such as this one. There are handouts in Module 6 that might be particularly helpful to use in this way.

FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS: This guide may be used by health care providers when working with women with anxiety during pregnancy and following the birth of their baby. This guide can provide a structure for:

1. educating women and their families about anxiety during pregnancy and following the birth
2. teaching effective skills for anxiety management

This guide has information and exercises that can help women with anxiety

module 1



Modules 2 through 6 in this guide are written in the voice of a healthcare provider talking to a woman with anxiety during pregnancy and following the birth.

This guide provides both information and exercises that can be used to help with the treatment of women with anxiety during pregnancy or following the birth. Depending on the severity of the anxiety, this guide can be used on its own by health care providers or in combination with other treatment options such as medication. The different section(s) of the guide may be chosen to personalize the treatment approach.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The guide is organized into different modules. Women may find it helpful to work through the material in the order it appears. Or, they may find that a particular section of a module, for example, 'Self-Care: The NEST-S Program', is a more appropriate place to start. That's OK too. Later on, try to review all of the sections, as each section provides information and new skills. What's important is that this guide is used in a way that fits the woman's current life situation.

Also, remember that it is perfectly reasonable to go through this guide a few pages at a time. It is often a good idea for women to re-read sections that apply to them, so they have more than one chance to learn everything they need to know. A lot of women find that some ideas make sense right away while others only sink in after they have been reviewed many times. Most women with anxiety will find that each of the sections has something helpful to offer — the important thing is to pick something that they feel they can handle and start the learning process.

GETTING STARTED

One way to get started is to learn more about anxiety by reading **Module 2: Information for women: what is anxiety?**

After reading this information, consider completing the **Self-test for anxiety symptoms in pregnancy and following the birth** in **Module 6** — this can help a woman to better understand her own pattern of symptoms. This will not give her a diagnosis of anxiety, but will help direct her to the specific sections of the guide which are most relevant to the symptoms she is experiencing.



WE'RE LOOKING FOR FEEDBACK

We would like to hear about whether or not this guide has been helpful in your self-management or, if you are a health care provider, in your treatment of women with anxiety during and following the birth. We are open to suggestions about any changes that you think could make this guide more helpful for women.

Please contact the BC Reproductive Mental Health Program with any feedback.

DISCLAIMER

The information in this guide is not meant to provide or substitute for, professional medical help or other health services.

This guide focuses on self-care and cognitive behavioral strategies for the treatment of anxiety during and following the birth. This does not detract from our support for the use of certain medications for treating anxiety. This guide does not include everything that one should know about anxiety and treatment. Readers need to know that there is no single correct way to treat anxiety.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This guide has been developed in part by adapting previous work that has been published on anxiety and mood disorders. We have done our best to acknowledge in the text where material has been borrowed from other work. In addition, the authors would like to acknowledge the following publications that were used as key resources in the development of this guide:

- **Anxiety Disorders Tool Kit.** BC Partners for Mental Health Addictions Information, Vancouver BC, 2003. Available on-line at <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/publications/toolkits>
- **BCP Here to Help: Problem Solving & Healthy Thinking Wellness Modules.** BC Partners for Mental Health Addictions Information, Vancouver BC, 2004-2005. Available on-line at <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/skills/managing-well-being>
- **The Antidepressant Skills Workbook.** Dan Bilsker and Randy Paterson, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction (CARMHA), Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, BC 2005. Available on line at <http://www.comh.ca/antidepressant-skills/adult/workbook/>



The authors would also like to acknowledge these sources that were consulted in the development of this guide:

- **Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision.** Washington DC, American Psychiatric Association, 2000
- **Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think.** Dennis Greenberger and Christine A. Padesky. Guilford Press, New York, NY, 1995.
- **Overcoming Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: A Behavioral and Cognitive Protocol for the Treatment of OCD.** Gail Steketee. New Harbinger, Oakland, CA, 1999.
- **Postpartum Depression and Anxiety: A Self Help Guide for Mothers.** Pacific Post Partum Support Society, Vancouver BC, 1997. www.postpartum.org , 604-255-7999.
- **The Feeling Good Handbook, Revised Edition.** David D. Burns. Plume, New York: NY, 1999.
- **When Baby Brings the Blues: Solutions for Postpartum Depression.** Ariel Dalfen. John Willey & Sons Canada, Ltd, Mississauga, ON, 2009.
- **New mothers' thoughts of harm related to the newborn.** Nichole Fairbrother and Sheila Woody. Archive of Women's Mental Health (2008), vol 11, pp221-229.

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