

### Stress

Women often feel stressed as they try to balance the demands of family and work. Too much stress can affect your health and make you feel anxious, depressed, or upset. Women under a lot of stress are more likely to deliver a baby too early. You may be so busy meeting everyone else's needs, that you forget your own.

### Here are some helpful ways to keep stress in check:

- Take some time for yourself each day even if is only 10 minutes
- Learn to say "No". (Do not take on too much at one time.)
- Focus on things you can control rather than on things you cannot prevent or change
- Express your feelings - keep a journal
- Let go of anger and bitterness - learn to forgive
- Eat healthy foods, exercise, and get plenty of sleep
- Learn relaxation techniques, like deep breathing, meditation, yoga, Tai Chi, or even just walking

### Avoid unhealthy ways of dealing with stress, like:

- Smoking
- Using alcohol or drugs
- Overeating or eating too little
- Sleeping too much
- Pulling away from friends, family, or activities you usually like to do
- Staying busy to avoid facing problems

### Depression

Everyone feels down or sad occasionally, but these feelings usually pass within a few days. When the sad feelings do not go away or get worse and get in the way of with your daily life, you may be suffering from depression. Depression is an illness that affects mood, thoughts, body, and behavior.

Not everyone has all of these symptoms. **However, if you have five or more symptoms that have lasted for more than two weeks, you may be suffering from depression.** You and your doctor should discuss the best treatment for you.

### Symptoms of depression may include:

- Constant sad, anxious, or empty feelings
- Having no hope
- Feelings of guilt or that you are not worth anything
- Loss of interest in fun activities
- Feeling tired all the time
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Not able to go to sleep or stay asleep
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Ongoing aches and pains, headaches, or digestive problems that do not go away
- Thoughts of suicide or making suicide attempts

## Domestic Violence

- Domestic violence occurs when someone uses shame, threats, or injury to control another person. Domestic violence can get worse during pregnancy and cause your baby to be hurt or born too early. No one deserves to be treated this way. There are people who can help. **Call the National 24 hour Domestic Violence Hotline at: 1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY for the Deaf)**

## Keep in Mind

- Having a good support system of family and friends can help you get through difficult times
- If you feel overwhelmed by stress, find help. Stress can be managed by learning positive ways to deal with things that upset you
- Stress, depression, and abuse can have serious effects on your health and the health of your children
- Depression can get worse in pregnancy and after the birth of a baby. For information go to <http://www.postpartumcouples.com>
- Help is available if you are using alcohol or drugs
  - Call **1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)** for information and referral
  - Go to <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov> to find a health care provider in your area.

## Health Care Provider Instructions

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## Next Steps

I will take steps to manage my stress including \_\_\_\_\_ and avoid those behaviors that hurt my health, my relationships, or the health of my children.

I will get help for my depression by \_\_\_\_\_.

## Resources

National Institute of Mental Health <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression-what-every-woman-should-know/summary.shtml>

American Academy of Family Physicians <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/women/mental/443.html>

National Domestic Violence <http://www.ndvh.org>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Drug and Alcohol Treatment <http://www.samhsa.gov/index.aspx>

Maternal Stress <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/pregnancyandbeyond/depression/help.htm>

HRSA Information Center at **1-888-ASK-HRSA**

HRSA Women's Health and Wellness "Women's guide to emotional wellness"

<http://www.hrsa.gov/womenshealth/ewtools/wguide/index.htm>

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