



Pregnancy & Bipolar Disorder: For Family and Friends

Family members or close friends are often called in for support and guidance in relation to decisions about pregnancy and after delivery. There are certain things you can do to manage your stress as well as help your family member cope:



Learn about bipolar disorder. Familiarize yourself with the symptoms of the illness, its causes/triggers, and various treatment approaches. It is also important to learn how pregnancy and childbirth affect the illness.



Educate yourself about the early symptoms of relapse. Identifying early symptoms is important for prevention and treatment of mood episodes. Mood episodes may begin with different symptoms in different people. For example, sleep loss may be the first symptom of mania in some patients; for others, it may be racing thoughts or a euphoric/irritable mood.



Participate in her care. If possible, accompany her to doctor's appointments. This will allow you to ask questions and share your observations. If you are concerned about her condition between appointments, talk with her about connecting with her doctor and offer to help her schedule an earlier visit.



Encourage her to stick to her recommended treatment plan. Your loved one may need reminders to take her medication as prescribed.



Help her to get adequate sleep. Sleep disruption is common during pregnancy especially during late pregnancy and following delivery. Sleep loss can trigger a mood episode in individuals with bipolar disorder. By sharing the responsibility of providing care for the newborn, especially at night, mom has a better chance to get a good night's sleep.



Provide emotional support, reassurance, and hope. Helping a friend or family member cope with bipolar disorder can be stressful and demanding. Be supportive but be sure to pay attention to your own needs. Most healthcare providers who treat individuals with bipolar disorder are usually able to help and provide education to their support system as well.

