

Women war veterans face higher risk of mental health problems during pregnancy

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Pregnancy among women veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan appears to increase their risk for mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), according to a study published in *Journal of Women's Health*, a peer-reviewed journal published by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.

The stress associated with [military service](#) in a war zone may later contribute to an increased risk of [mental health problems](#) if a woman veteran becomes pregnant. Because the hormonal and physiological changes that accompany [pregnancy](#) can bring on or worsen various [mental health conditions](#) it is important to understand what effects military service might have on a pregnant woman's mental health status and how that might affect pregnancy outcomes.

Kristin Mattocks, PhD, Yale University School of Medicine (New Haven, CT), and colleagues from VA Connecticut Healthcare System (West Haven, CT), Indiana University School of Medicine (Indianapolis), and UCLA School of Public Health (Los Angeles, CA), reviewed the records of more than 43,000 women veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan and completed their military service between 2001 and 2008. The authors emphasize the importance of identifying and providing appropriate diagnostic and treatment services for this at-risk population in the paper entitled, "Pregnancy and Mental Health Among Women Veterans Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan."

"With the increased number of women serving in the military, it is

important that we understand their unique health issues such as mental health problems during pregnancy," says Editor-in-Chief Susan G. Kornstein, MD, Executive Director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Institute for Women's Health, Richmond, VA.

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.

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