

Stopping meds during pregnancy does not increase risk of depression

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(Medical Xpress) -- Women who discontinue using antidepressants during pregnancy do not appear to have greater risk of having a depressive episode during and after term than those who continue using medications, a new Yale University study shows.

The new study published online September 8 and scheduled to appear in the November print issue of the journal *Epidemiology* followed a group of women who were seeking [prenatal care](#), through [pregnancy](#) and into the [postpartum period](#). A sub-group of 778 women had a history of depression and decided individually whether to continue or discontinue antidepressant medication. The researchers found that generally, there was no difference in the risk of having a major [depressive episode](#) between women who continued taking medication and those who did

not.

"Women often know if they can discontinue medication because they have intimate experience of what happens when they stop treatment. We think that the women who felt they could stop treatment, temporarily did so and generally remained well," said Kimberly Yonkers, professor of psychiatry and obstetrics, gynecology, and reproductive sciences, and lead author of the report.

On the other hand, women who had suffered four or more major depressive episodes prior to their pregnancy were likely to experience depression during pregnancy whether or not they were taking [antidepressants](#).

"Those women should carefully consider their options. There were women with severe illness who felt they could not stop medication, and they continued treatment in pregnancy. This group had a high rate of relapse into depression but it might have been even higher if they stopped their treatment," Yonkers said.

The Yale team is currently analyzing effects of antidepressant use on the health of babies born to depressed mothers.

Provided by Yale University

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