

More studies needed on mental health treatments during and after pregnancy

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Untreated mental health disorders can be a serious problem for women and their children during pregnancy and after giving birth, during the postpartum period.

A recent analysis funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and published in *Psychiatric Research & Clinical Practice* notes that few studies have examined the benefits of medications for [mental health disorders](#) in pregnant and postpartum women. And while many studies have reported on potential harms, the large majority could not separate the effect of medications from the effect of the underlying disorder. As a result, it is not clear that these medications caused harms to pregnant or postpartum women.

A total of 164 studies were included in the analysis. Study results indicate that brexanolone and sertraline likely lessen [depressive symptoms](#), and mood stabilizers may reduce recurrence of bipolar disorder.

"It's vital for patients and providers to make informed decisions during pregnancy and postpartum, and our study shows a need for more and higher quality research in regards to mental health treatments," said Meera Viswanathan Ph.D., of the AHRQ Evidence-based Practice Center at RTI International—University of North Carolina.

More information: Meera Viswanathan et al, Maternal, Fetal, and Child Outcomes of Mental Health Treatments in Women: A Meta-Analysis of Pharmacotherapy, *Psychiatric Research and Clinical Practice* (2021). [DOI: 10.1176/appi.prcp.20210001](https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.prcp.20210001)

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