

# New study links risk factors to variations in postpartum depression

August 3 2016

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A new study shows that depression following childbirth can begin at different times and follow multiple distinct trajectories, emphasizing the need for clinicians to monitor for signs of postpartum depression and be aware of risk factors that may predispose a new mother to depression. The study, "Trajectories of Depressive Symptoms Throughout the Peri- and Postpartum Period: Results from the First Baby Study," is published in *Journal of Women's Health*.

Jennifer McCall-Hosenfeld, MD, Eric Schaefer, Junjia Zhu, PhD and Kristen Kjerulff, PhD, Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine, Hershey, and Kristen Phiri, MD, Williamsport Family Medicine Residency Program, PA, identify and characterize six different depression paths based on their analysis of more than 3,000 first-time mothers, beginning in the third trimester of pregnancy and continuing through the first year after birth. They describe [risk factors](#) for depression and distinguish between the more common and less frequent course of depression observed, which included a minority of women who became newly and increasingly depressed over the first 12 months postpartum.

"These findings provide an important new depth of understanding of this common disorder affecting pregnant women and new mothers," says Susan G. Kornstein, MD, Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Women's Health*, Executive Director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Institute for Women's Health, Richmond, VA, and President of the Academy of Women's Health. "The study follows closely on the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force assessment supporting screening for depression in pregnant and [postpartum women](#)."

**More information:** Jennifer S. McCall-Hosenfeld et al, Trajectories of Depressive Symptoms Throughout the Peri- and Postpartum Period: Results from the First Baby Study, *Journal of Women's Health* (2016). [DOI: 10.1089/jwh.2015.5310](https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2015.5310)

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

Citation: New study links risk factors to variations in postpartum depression (2016, August 3)  
retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-08-links-factors-variations-postpartum-depression.html>

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