



Managing Anxiety and Depression in Pregnancy

Practicing self-care

We are so busy ensuring others are taken care of, we often neglect to take care of ourselves and ensure our essential needs are met. Sometimes finances impede our ability to practice self-care (e.g. the need to work more than one job to ensure rent and bills are paid, no benefits from employment and no extra finances to pay for private services). Some may view practicing self-care as inconvenient and provoke feelings of selfishness or guilt (e.g. your employer may sigh and roll their eyes when you request time off to attend a medical appointment or your young child(ren) start to cry when they see you leaving for a work out at the gym).

It is important to note that we *cannot sustainably and adequately care for others unless we are caring for ourselves.*

How we provide self-care and how much self-care one needs is highly individual. Ways of self-care include eating a balanced diet at regular intervals, regular exercise, getting adequate rest/sleep, regular mindfulness/meditation, and seeking appropriate health care when needed.

Talk therapy (counselling)

Counselling is provided by trained health care professionals. It is meant to help one process negative thoughts, thinking patterns, trauma, life events, and emotions and make positive changes in a non-judgemental and safe environment. There are many forms of talk therapy, but the most effective form of therapy for anxiety and depression is called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). CBT helps you change or alter how you think or process events/behaviours in healthier and more positive ways.

Counselling can be provided on an individual basis, or you can attend couples or group counselling sessions. Sessions are mostly done in person, however some providers offer phone or chat counselling through secure chat programs online.

Counselling is not covered by OHIP, and thus you are responsible for payment of these services, however coverage is generally provided by medical benefit plans through employers. If you do not have benefits through an employer, you may choose to pay out of pocket, or there are some agencies and individuals which provide services for payment which is geared to income. There are many agencies within the KW-C area which provide counselling services on a drop in basis and geared to income payment.

Medication

Medications work by balancing certain chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters in order to reduce or alleviate symptoms of anxiety or depression. Many individuals require medication on a short-term basis, as many issues relating to mental health can be alleviated through counselling. Some individuals may require medication on a long term basis as they may need to rely on medication to maintain balance of their neurotransmitters. There are many medications which are safer to take in pregnancy and pose minimal risks for the developing baby. Often the use of medication during pregnancy outweighs the risks of untreated/uncontrolled mental health concerns during pregnancy. It is important to check in frequently with your family physician if you take medications to manage anxiety/depression during pregnancy.

BounceBack Program

BounceBack is a free skill-building program managed by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). It is designed to help adults and youth 15+ manage low mood, mild to moderate depression and anxiety, stress or worry. Delivered over the phone with a coach and through online videos, you will get access to tools that will support you on your path to mental wellness. Important to note that the coaches in this program are not trained clinicians (meaning they are not therapists).

This program is available on a self-refer basis, however, you must list your family doctor or nurse practitioner on your registration form. Your midwife cannot be listed as your 'primary health care provider' currently.

This program requires no appointments have to be made, you do not have to leave your home/arrange childcare in order to participate, and is free of charge.

Anxiety Canada

A website dedicated to educating Canadians about anxiety, and also offers tools and resources to deal with anxiety. Offers free downloadable resources, a tool to create a step-by-step anxiety management plan, and a free mobile app called MindShift CBT to aid in managing anxiety.