



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**  
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**  
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**  
Program Topic : **Dealing with Depression (EXTRACARE)**

#### **Guidelines to the presenter**

- Presenter – please familiarize yourself with the brief and the use the facts effectively by referring to them from time to time during the show.
- You should be seen as a peer rather than an authority.
- Offer guidance or opinion rather than telling people what to do.
- Encourage people to seek further information
- Always keep the objectives and outcomes in mind and drive these.

#### **Topic:**

Dealing with depression

#### **Objectives**

- To further the understanding of maternal depression
- To highlight the warning signs and appropriate action/care
- To provide information for parents (and women especially) that assists them to build healthier families and better environments for children
- To create awareness of the risks of untreated maternal depression

#### **Introduction**

On this show, we celebrate the fact that you are the most important person in your child' life. You have the power to give your child the best possible start in life and it doesn't have to cost you a cent. All it takes is your love, play and talk.

We have talked generally about mental health issues that many pregnant women face.

Today we'll focus more on the causes, the signs and what should be done about it. Sometimes mental issues are overlooked with people saying "its just in the mind", but if left untreated they can have serious consequences. One in three women living with many stress factors will suffer from mental health problems related to pregnancy. Living with stress factors such as poverty, violence, HIV, social isolation, unwanted pregnancy etc. all contribute to high levels of maternal mental health problems. Mental distress can affect the health of the mother and the health of the baby leading to problems with physical and emotional growth. When a mother is mentally well, she is best able to plan her life and make good choices.

Questions	Facts/Information
<p>1. <i>What is Maternal Mental health?</i></p>	<p>We spoke before about how emotional and stressful pregnancy and parenting can be. This can have an effect on parents, and particularly mothers. This can affect their mental health, sometimes leading to mental illness. Just to remind listeners that there is a difference between mental distress (common in pregnancy and needing support) and a mental illness. The term mental disorder may also be used.</p> <p>When it is clear that a person is experiencing some sort of mental suffering, the more general term used is mental distress. For example, a mother may be distressed about her baby being in hospital, but she does not necessarily have a mental illness.</p>
<p>2. <i>Is mental illness common in pregnancy?</i></p>	<p>Pregnancy and the postnatal period is a psychologically distressing time for many women, particularly those living in poverty, or with violence, abuse or HIV/AIDS. The burden of maternal mental illness (mental illness during and after</p>

	<p>pregnancy) in low and middle-income countries is high.</p> <p>In South Africa, nearly half of poor pregnant women experience depression, anxiety or other mental illnesses. This is three times higher than the prevalence found in developed countries. It is also significantly higher than the rate in other developing countries such as Nigeria or Uganda. 35% of women had postnatal depression in a low-income, township setting.</p>
<p>3. <i>Why should we care about maternal mental health? Why is it so important?</i></p>	<p>Untreated antenatal anxiety and depression may have adverse long-lasting physical, cognitive, and emotional effects for the foetus, infant, and child</p> <p>Mental illness can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- affect the development of the foetus in the womb</li> <li>- affect the infant's ability to thrive</li> <li>- affect the child's development (physical, emotional, intellectual)</li> <li>- lead to physical illness</li> <li>- lead to defaulting on HIV or TB treatments</li> <li>- impact on people's ability to function, keep their job, or be attentive parents</li> </ul>
<p>4. <i>Why causes maternal mental illness?</i></p>	<p>In South Africa, there are many risk factors which can contribute to maternal mental illness, especially among women living in poverty. Social, economic and physical factors can contribute to women's risk for maternal mental illness.</p>
<p>5. <i>What type of care is needed by</i></p>	<p>Women experiencing mental distress</p>

<p><i>distressed mothers?</i></p>	<p>need:  Someone who really ‘listens’ to them  Time, and a safe space to talk to someone and share their feelings  Supportive health workers who do not judge them  Respect  The chance to explore their own possible solutions  The opportunity to identify practical options  Contact with supportive mothers who have had similar experiences</p>
<p>6. <i>Are there key things you should tell them?</i></p>	<p>Key messages are that You are not alone.  You are not to blame for how you feel  There is help available for you</p>
<p>7. <i>Can you provide counseling to a mother in distress?</i></p>	<p>Being a counsellor requires special training. There are, however, things that you can do to support the mother, such as listening to her.</p>
<p>8. <i>How do you offer good listening and support?</i></p>	<p>Paying careful attention to what someone is saying, as well as their verbal and non-verbal communication helps them to feel heard and supported. It requires you, as the listener, to give sincere feedback to show empathy and that you have understood what the person has said. It is important not to express judgement or give too many personal opinions.</p>
<p>9. <i>What is the difference between antenatal and postnatal depression?</i></p>	<p>Antenatal depression happens during pregnancy and postnatal happens after the child is born,</p>
<p>10. <i>Why is it important to get</i></p>	<p>In South Africa, reported rates of</p>

<p><i>treatment for these?</i></p> <p><i>11. What are the symptoms of depression?</i></p> <p><i>12. I have heard that many mothers do not recognize that they have</i></p>	<p>antenatal depression are three times higher than in developed countries. Antenatal depression is also one of the strongest risk factors for postnatal depression. When women receive adequate treatment during pregnancy for antenatal depression, the mental disorder progression can be halted, and the many intergenerational consequences avoided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a persistent feeling of sadness and low mood</li> <li>• loss of interest in the world around you and no longer enjoying things that used to give pleasure</li> <li>• lack of energy and feeling tired all the time (<a href="#">fatigue</a>)</li> </ul> <p>Postnatal depression can interfere with your day-to-day life. Some women feel unable to look after their baby, or feel too anxious to leave the house or keep in touch with friends.</p> <p>Some women who have postnatal depression get thoughts about harming their baby. This is quite common, affecting around half of all women with the condition. They may also have thoughts about harming or killing themselves. These thoughts do not mean someone is a bad mother, and it is very rare for either mother or baby to be harmed, but it is essential that this person gets help. Either by seeing their local health worker or going for counseling.</p> <p>It's important for partners, family members and friends to recognise signs of</p>
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<p><i>postnatal depression, and do not talk to family and friends about their true feelings? How can you recognize the signs?</i></p>	<p>postnatal depression at an early stage. Warning signs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They frequently cry for no obvious reason.</li> <li>They have difficulties bonding with their baby.</li> <li>They seem to be neglecting themselves – for example, not washing or changing clothes.</li> <li>They seem to have lost all sense of time – often unaware if 10 minutes or two hours have passed.</li> <li>They lose all sense of humour and cannot see the funny side of anything.</li> <li>They worry something is wrong with their baby, regardless of reassurance.</li> </ul> <p>If you think someone you know has postnatal depression, encourage them to open up and talk about their feelings to you, a friend, GP or health visitor. Postnatal depression needs to be properly treated and isn't something you can just snap out of.</p>
<p><i>13. What happens when a mother goes for professional counseling?</i></p>	<p>This is a one-on-one conversation with a trained counselor who will offer support, guidance and assist the mother with coming up with plans and possible solutions.</p>
<p><i>14. What kind of treatment is offered for depression?</i></p>	<p>In instances of moderate to severe depression, pharmacological treatment is usually recommended, and effective in decreasing depressive symptoms. However, many professionals are careful of using antidepressants during pregnancy in case they effect the foetus. However with improvements in</p>

<p><i>15. Should one take anti-depressants if one is depressed?</i></p>	<p>pharmacology, several antidepressants have been reported to be relatively safe to use during pregnancy.</p> <p>In cases of moderate to severe antenatal depression, antidepressants can improve the effectiveness of counselling interventions. Providing access to antidepressants for severely depressed women also overcome the debilitating effects of depression and increases the likelihood of taking up counselling and general health services.</p>
<p><i>16. Do you have to take treatment?</i></p>	<p>Regardless of the severity of a woman's symptoms, it is essential that she be made aware of the relative risks of antidepressants use and the impact of untreated antenatal depression and anxiety. It remains the woman's choice to either initiate or continue her pharmacological treatment, or to choose alternative non-pharmacological treatment.</p>
<p><i>17. What are the risks of untreated maternal depression?</i></p>	<p>Poor foetal and infant outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor maternal-infant attachment</li> <li>• Lower cognitive and social functioning in infants</li> <li>• Lower language achievements</li> <li>• Increased behavioural and psychiatric problems in childhood</li> </ul> <p>Poor maternal health outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor uptake of health care services, including antenatal care and HIV prevention and treatment protocols</li> <li>• Poor nutrition</li> </ul>

<p><i>18. There are a number of organisations and services available to women to support them (and for families too). Could you tell us about some of them?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical and obstetric complications, including pre-term</li> <li>• Increased risk of substance misuse</li> <li>• Increased risk of relapse in the postpartum period</li> <li>• Psychotic symptoms</li> </ul> <p>Mental illness can have long-lasting consequences from one generation to the next: studies show links between mental illness in parents and poor emotional, physical, and developmental outcomes for infants and children. For example: Mental illness in pregnant women is associated with: poor foetal growth premature delivery. As a result, infants could be more vulnerable to infections and diseases more frequently admitted to hospital. These health outcomes are linked to infant mortality and impaired development of children under five years - especially in contexts of poverty, violence, and poor education. Also, children of mothers with mental illness are more likely to: be abused perform poorly at school develop mental illness themselves</p> <p>FAMSA (Family and Marriage Society)  Cape Town 021 447 7951 Gauteng  011 975 7106  Lifeline 0861 322 322  SA Depression and Anxiety Group 011 262  6396  AIDS Helpline 0800 012 322  Crisis counselling for women 0800 150  150  National Mental Health Information Line</p>
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**Conclusion**

With the correct social and emotional support, mothers can feel better. Talking about your feelings and troubles to trusted health workers, family, friends, or community members can help you feel healthier. Also use the services that are available:

FAMSA (Family and Marriage Society) Cape Town 021 447 7951 Gauteng

011 975 7106

Lifeline 0861 322 322

SA Depression and Anxiety Group 011 262 6396

AIDS Helpline 0800 012 322

Crisis counselling for women 0800 150 150

National Mental Health Information Line 0800 567 567

Remember your child is experiencing what you are experiencing.

**Learning outcomes**

After listening to this show the audience should:

- Be aware of the potential maternal health issues and their risks
- Understand the importance of support to pregnant moms and mothers/ carers
- Understand that mothers are not to blame for feeling stressed or depressed
- Know that simple things like talking to people such as your healthcare worker about your problems or taking some time to rest can help.