Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

# Women whose babies have been exposed to mental health medication

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# For Women Whose Babies Have Been Exposed to Mental Health Medications in Pregnancy

## Patient Information

## Maternity Department

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## I need to take medication for my mental health during pregnancy – what does this mean when my baby is born?

Women need to take medication for many different physical and mental health problems during pregnancy. You have been given this leaflet because you and your doctor decided that it would be safest for you to take medication for your mental health during pregnancy.

This includes antidepressants, antipsychotics, and anti-anxiety medications. Some babies can experience symptoms after birth because of these medicines. For this reason, your baby will have a physical health check within 24 hours of birth. You should not worry about this – even if babies do develop symptoms, these usually settle down within a few days without the need for any treatment.

## Do I need to do anything when I am pregnant?

- Make sure you tell the people involved in your care what medication you are taking
- Don't stop or make any changes to your medication without talking to your doctor first
- Take medication regularly and make sure you don't run out – if this happens, make sure you talk to your GP or psychiatry doctor about what to do.
- Your doctor/specialist midwife will discuss with you any possible symptoms your baby might experience

## What about after my baby is born?

- If you give birth in hospital, a doctor/midwife will check your baby just after birth (usually within the first 24 hours, this will be completed before discharge), to make sure that he/she is not experiencing any physical health problems.
- The reviews will include checking your baby's alertness and looking for any signs of irritability or distress, testing his/her movements for any stiffness or floppiness, as well as listening to the baby's heart and lungs.
- The doctor/midwife will also ask if you have any worries about your baby's wellbeing, including how he/she is settling, feeding, and sleeping.
- The check will take around 10 minutes and is not harmful or painful for your baby
- During the check, the doctor/midwife will talk to you about any concerns they find with your baby, and whether these are due to medication or other causes. They will explain any investigations or treatment needed.

## Caring for your baby at home.

- Before you are discharged, the midwife will discuss with you symptoms you should look out for and what to do if your baby develops any of these and how to care for your baby once home.
- If you have taken mental health medication in pregnancy and you go home from hospital within 24 hours, or have a home birth, your baby will be examined again by a midwife on the second day after birth.
- You will be supported to feed your baby however you choose to do so.

## Who should I speak to if I’m worried about my baby’s health?

- If you are worried about your baby, speak to your GP, midwife or health visitor
- If at any time your baby appears unwell, drowsy or has feeding difficulties, you should

see your GP or take your baby to A&E.

Further information about medications in pregnancy can be found at:

BUMPS (Best Use of Medicines in Pregnancy)

Royal College of Psychiatrists:

Reference:

Pan-London Perinatal Mental Health: Guidance for New-born Assessment (2017)



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