

Substance Use and Depression in Postpartum Women

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Today's Talk

- Background
- Methods
- Results
 - Substance Use Prevalence among Postpartum Women;
 - Postpartum Depression and Substance Use among Adults;
 - Postpartum Depression and Substance Use among Adolescents.
- Discussion
 - Treatment;
 - Screening and Referrals.

The Problem

2002-2003 Substance Abuse Prevalence

Women aged 15-44 years	Binge Alcohol Use*	Illicit or Nonmedical Rx Drug Use
Not Pregnant/ Postpartum	23.8% ¹	10.6% ¹
Pregnant	↓ 4.1% ²	↓ 4.3% ²
Postpartum	↑ 14.9% ³	↑ 8.5% ³

* Blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels are ≥ 0.08 g/dL, which usually occurs after about 4 drinks within 2 hours for women.

A Missed Prevention Opportunity

Period of Vulnerability

- Mental health issues often go overlooked during pregnancy and in the postpartum period;⁴⁻⁵
- Depression correlates with substance use and disorders via multiple processes;⁶⁻⁷
- Women with postpartum depression may be at greater risk for substance use compared to postpartum women without similar depression.

Period of Vulnerability

• Postpartum substance abuse may include resumption of past behaviors or initiation of new ones;

• Reasons new mothers may turn to substances include:

- Improve mood,
- Relieve stress and anxiety,
- Assist with falling asleep,
- Provide energy,
- And...



Postpartum Depression

- A moderate to severe depression occurring within a year of giving birth;
- Affects approximately 10-15% of all women;⁸
- Thought to result from hormonal changes, psychological adjustments, and fatigue;⁸



Postpartum Depression

- Adolescents may be particularly vulnerable to postpartum depression
- Factors associated with postpartum depression in adolescents include:
 - Age,
 - Hispanic Race,
 - Stress,
 - Perceived Familial Support...
- Kleiber, B.V., Dimidjian, S. (2014). Postpartum Depression Among Adolescent Mothers: A Comprehensive Review of Prevalence, Course, Correlates, Consequences, and Interventions. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 21, 48-66

Examples of Adult and Adolescent Risks

- Limited social support;⁹
- History of depression, especially in pregnancy;⁹
- A partner experiencing poor mental health;⁹
- Young age;⁹
- History of substance abuse.¹⁰



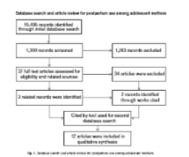
A Critical Time

- Postpartum substance use and depression increase risk of child neglect and abuse;¹¹⁻¹⁴
- The postpartum period is transitional and a critical time to intervene;¹⁵
- Mothers with past substance use problems may be especially vulnerable to recidivism.¹⁶



Methods

- We identified 23 studies published from 1999 to 2012;
- Eleven focused on adults and twelve on adolescents;
- For a full discussion of methods, please see Chapman and Wu, 2013a and b.¹⁷⁻¹⁸



Alcohol Use

- A standard drink contains ~0.6 fluid ounces of alcohol.¹⁹
- Problem drinking is characterized by heavy or binge drinking.²⁰



Prevalence of Alcohol Use

- Problem drinking ranged from 1.5% - 8.4% among postpartum women;²¹⁻²²
 - Lower than among those neither pregnant nor postpartum (7.2%-25.8%);^{21, 23}
 - But higher than among pregnant women (0.02%-3.2%);^{21, 23}
- Postpartum drinkers were characterized by being white and low-income;¹⁷
- Correlates of postpartum problem drinking included being unmarried, smoking cigarettes, and being unemployed.¹⁷

Alcohol Use and Breast Feeding

- While drinking responsibly in the postpartum period may not be a cause for concern, breastfeeding can complicate this issue;
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends restricting alcohol consumption when lactating;
- Myths about the benefits of alcohol consumption while breastfeeding persist.



Alcohol Use and Breastfeeding

- Breastfeeding studies suggest breast feeding may be protective against risky drinking;²⁴⁻²⁵
- However studies also find that when compared to nursing mothers and women who never nursed, women who weaned early drank most often and reported the most binge drinking.²⁵



Prevalence of Illicit Drug Use

Any Use in the Past 30 Days²³

Postpartum	Pregnant	Not Pregnant nor Postpartum
Marijuana/Hashish 4.6%	Marijuana/Hashish 2.8%	Marijuana/Hashish 7.3%
Polydrug Use 3.9%	Polydrug Use 1.4%	Polydrug Use 6.5%
Psychotherapeutics 2.6%	Psychotherapeutics 1.1%	Psychotherapeutics 4.0%
Cocaine (& Crack) 0.6%	Cocaine (& Crack) 0.3%	Cocaine (& Crack) 1.2%

Illicit Drug Use and Breastfeeding

- There is a need for studies that address breastfeeding among drug using postpartum women.
- Drugs in breast milk may harm infants and negatively impact mother/child relations.



Illicit Drug Use

- Drug use was higher among postpartum women than pregnant women but lower than among non-pregnant/non-postpartum women
- Marijuana, non-medical Rx drug, and cocaine use were highest among Whites, followed by Blacks, and then Hispanics;²¹⁻²³
- However, odds of drug use among Black new mothers did not differ from Black women neither pregnant nor postpartum.²³

To Recap

- During it's peak period postpartum depression may occur in up to 14.5% of new mothers;
- Clinical and epidemiologic studies have shown that substance use and depressive disorders are risks for one another;
- We found five studies that addressed postpartum depression and substance use or abuse.



Postpartum Depression & Substance Use among Adults

Bryan et al., 1999²⁶

- Of the 3.7% of new mothers who displayed depressive symptoms, 20% had a history of substance abuse;
- Only 4.6% of new mothers without depressive symptoms reported a similar history of substance abuse;
- Prenatal drug use was also higher among those with postpartum depressive symptoms (46.7%) when compared to those without (16.5%).

Postpartum Depression & Substance Use among Adults

Pajulo et al., 2001²⁷

- Compared to 12 women without a history of substance use, postpartum depressive symptoms were higher among 12 new Finnish mothers in treatment for substance use from 1994-1995 (8% vs. 25% at 3 months and 8% vs. 42% at 6 months);
- Sample size limited usefulness of findings.



Postpartum Depression & Substance Use among Adults

Homish et al., 2004²⁸

- Postpartum alcohol use positively associated with depressive symptoms, cigarette use, and binge drinking in any of the three trimesters.



Postpartum Depression & Substance Use among Adults

Salisbury et al., 2007²⁹

- Depressive symptoms were prevalent among 385 women who used cocaine prenatally (19.7%);
- Prenatal cocaine users with depressive symptoms were more likely than those without depressive symptoms to report postpartum cocaine use (26.3% vs. 14.3%).



Postpartum Depression & Substance Use among Adults

Wilton et al., 2009³⁰

- 38.7% of postpartum alcohol users indicated a high level of depressive symptoms at 6-months postpartum;
- Alcohol use at baseline or six-month follow-up did not correlate with depressive symptoms;
- However, level of depressive symptoms were significantly reduced among those who received a brief alcohol intervention.

Postpartum Depression & Substance Use among Adults

Synthesis of Findings

- Identified studies focused predominantly on socially marginalized populations and on women with substance use history;
- However, they found prevalent postpartum depressive symptoms among these women (19.7%-46%);^{26, 29}
- And women with higher depressive symptom scores were more likely than those with lower scores to engage in alcohol or illicit drug use.^{26, 29}

What It Means

- Findings suggest that women with postpartum depressive symptoms are more likely to use substances than new mothers without similar symptoms.
- Women with a history of substance abuse also appear more likely to experience postpartum depressive symptoms.
- Postpartum depressive symptoms and substance use may influence each other, resulting in adverse consequences.

Adolescents

- There is no acceptable substance use for this age group;
- Adolescent studies differed from studies of adult women.



Adolescents

- Among adolescent mothers, substance use significantly increased in the postpartum period;¹⁸
- Substance use was more prevalent among adolescent mothers compared to the general population of adolescent girls;¹⁸



Adolescents

- Only Barnett et al. (1995) specifically examined postpartum depression among adolescent mothers;
- Postpartum alcohol (24%) and drug use (22%) were prevalent;
- Odds of any alcohol or illicit drug use at 4 months postpartum were 3.3 times higher for those with high depressive symptom scores compared to those with lower scores.

Adolescents

- Alcohol and marijuana were the substances used most often;¹⁸
- Substance use was disproportionately higher among girls with a history of sexual abuse, a drug-using boyfriend, a low self-worth, and depression.¹⁸
- Psychological distress and low self-esteem appeared to influence continued use;¹⁸



Adolescents

- Adolescent girls were not a homogeneous group;
- It appeared that some adolescent mothers were more prone to difficult life trajectories than others and better classification is needed for more targeted prevention efforts.^{18, 31}



Adolescents

- Problem Behavior Theory - Problem behaviors cluster because they may serve the same purposes socially, developmentally, or psychologically or are the manifestation of similar underlying factors;
- Self-Medication Hypothesis - Adolescent mothers may self-medicate to deal with mental distress or illness or feelings associated with things, such as low self-esteem.

Adolescents

- Assisting new adolescent mothers refrain from substance use is imperative, as
- **Substance use remained prevalent and relatively stable as girls transitioned to adulthood, with rates much higher than the general population;**¹⁸



Treatment

- Women often enter substance abuse treatment to keep their children;
- Specific postpartum substance abuse treatment is often lacking;
- In the 1990s researchers began to integrate infant and early-childhood parent training into programs for recent mothers;
- Today, researchers are exploring how to incorporate strengthening mother/child bonds as part of treatment.

Treatment

- Research also suggests potential success for treating depression and co-occurring substance abuse together;
- Kuo et al. (2013) explored the treatment desires and needs of 18 pregnant and postpartum women with depression and in substance use treatment;³²
- Women viewed social support and imperative to dual recovery.³²

Who Can Screen and Intervene

- Obstetricians (postpartum care);
- Pediatricians (well-baby checks);
- Family Physicians (postpartum and well-baby checks);
- Public Health Nurses;
- Neonatal Care Nurses;
- WIC Providers;
- Lactation Consultants;
- Parents as Teachers;
- Anyone in Contact with New Mothers...



Screening and Intervention

- Multiple intervention models exist (additional research is needed on which work best in this population);
- Briefly screening women can identify those at risk of misusing substances and allow for appropriate referral.

Screening and Intervention

- Postpartum depression and substances abuse can affect anyone;
- However, women identified as possibly having increased risk were:
 - Those with limited social support,
 - Those with a history of depression or a depressed partner,
 - Those with a history of substance abuse,
 - Adolescents (particularly older adolescents),
 - Women who experienced difficulties with breastfeeding,
 - Women who were socially or economically marginalized, and
 - Women with low self-worth.

Screening Tool

- There is no optimal screening tool identified for determining substance use in pregnancy;³³
- Maternal interviews asking open-ended, non-judgmental questions are more likely to elicit disclosure of perinatal substance use;³³
- Examples of questionnaires include the T-ACE, TWEAK, and ALPHA.³³
 - T-ACE (http://www.beststart.org/resources/alr_reduction/pdf/ts_bookmark_lr.pdf)
 - TWEAK (<http://iustirt.org/tools/tweak-questionnaire/>)
 - ALPHA (<http://ocfp.on.ca/docs/default-source/cme/alpha-guidead64b74ce3a6.pdf?sfvrsn=0>)

Questions



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