## Key Clinical Considerations When Assessing the Mental Health of Pregnant and Postpartum Women

### Assessing Thoughts of Harming Baby

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thoughts of Harming Baby that Occur Secondary to Obsessions/Anxiety</th>
<th>Thoughts of Harming Baby that Occur Secondary to Postpartum Psychosis / Suspected Postpartum Psychosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Good insight  
• Thoughts are intrusive and scary  
• No psychotic symptoms  
• Thoughts cause anxiety | • Poor insight  
• Psychotic symptoms  
• Delusional beliefs with distortion of reality present |

**Suggests not at risk of harming baby**  
**Suggests at risk of harming baby**

### Assessing Suicidal Ideation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Risk</th>
<th>Higher Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • No prior attempts  
• No plan  
• No intent  
• No substance use  
• Protective factors (what prevents you from acting?) | • History of suicide attempt  
• High lethality of prior attempts  
• Current plan  
• Current intent  
• Substance use  
• Lack of protective factors (including social support) |

**Suggests Medication May Not Be Indicated**  
**Suggests Medication Treatment Should be Considered**

| Mild depression based on clinical assessment  
• No suicidal ideation  
• Engaged in psycho-therapy or other non-medication treatment  
• Depression has improved with psychotherapy in the past  
• Able to care for self/baby  
• Strong preference and access to psychotherapy | Moderate/severe depression based on clinical assessment  
• Suicidal ideation  
• Difficulty functioning caring for self/baby  
• Psychotic symptoms present  
• History of severe depression and/or suicide ideation/attempts  
• Comorbid anxiety dx/sxs |

### Risk Factors for Postpartum Depression

| Personal history of major or postpartum depression  
• Family history of postpartum depression  
• Gestational diabetes  
• Difficulty breastfeeding  
• Fetal/newborn loss  
• Lack of personal or community resources  
• Financial challenges | Complications of pregnancy, labor/delivery, or infant’s health  
• Teen pregnancy  
• Unplanned pregnancy  
• Major life stressors  
• Violent or abusive relationship  
• Isolation from family or friends  
• Substance use/addiction |

### How to Talk about Perinatal Depression with Moms

- How are you feeling about being pregnant/a mother?  
- What things are you most happy about?  
- What things are you most concerned about?  
- Do you have anyone you can talk to that you trust?  
- How is your partner doing?  
- Are you able to enjoy your baby?  

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1 This guideline has been adapted from materials made available by HealthTeamWorks and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) [http://www.healthteamworks.org/guidelines/depression.html](http://www.healthteamworks.org/guidelines/depression.html).

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