

Postnatal depression can possibly be prevented drug-free

16 January 2009

A heart-to-heart chat with a peer has proven an effective way to prevent postnatal depression in high risk women, cutting the risk of depression by 50%, according to a University of Toronto nursing study published in BMJ Online today.

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Provided by University of Toronto

Dr. Cindy-Lee Dennis, an associate professor at the Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing and Canada research chair in perinatal community health, examined the effectiveness of telephone-based peer support to prevent postnatal depression in high risk women.

After Web-based screening of more than 21,000 women from seven health regions in Ontario, 701 high risk mothers were recruited and randomized to receive standard postnatal care or standard care and the support of a peer volunteer (who had experienced postnatal depression themselves).

Mothers who received peer support had half the risk of developing postnatal depression at 12 weeks after birth than those in the control group. Mothers were receptive to receiving telephone-based peer support and more than 80% said they were satisfied with their experience and would recommend this support to a friend.

In an accompanying editorial, Dennis says "Women and family members need to be educated about postnatal depression so they can recognize the symptoms. Treatment needs to be convenient and accessible to new mothers." Although antidepressants are effective, many women are reluctant to take medication, especially when breast feeding. She calls for a coordinated multidisciplinary approach to identify postnatal depression involving all health professionals who come into contact with new mothers including midwives, doctors, nurses and health visitors.

Read Dr. Dennis' BMJ editorial and study here:

[www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/3...
an15_2/a2975?gca=bmj](http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/3...an15_2/a2975?gca=bmj)

APA citation: Postnatal depression can possibly be prevented drug-free (2009, January 16) retrieved 27 April 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-01-postnatal-depression-possibly-drug-free.html>

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