


A close-up photograph of a pregnant woman's hands resting on her belly. She is wearing a light grey t-shirt and a white long-sleeved top. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

Understanding Behavioral Health Before, During, and After Pregnancy

 **Seton** | Behavioral Health Care

At Seton Behavioral Health Care, we offer programs to support and lead you through life's challenges. This educational guide outlines some of the challenges faced by women considering pregnancy, who are pregnant, or who have had their baby, along with resources to meet those challenges. At Seton, we provide health care that thinks with its heart. We believe in showing everyone the dignity and respect they deserve while providing the best care possible. **Welcome to Humancare.**

What is behavioral health?

- How you think, feel, and act when faced with life's difficulties
- How you see yourself, your life, and the other people in your life
- How you evaluate and confront life's challenges

Why do I need to know about behavioral health before, during, and after pregnancy?

- Getting pregnant, being pregnant, and having a baby can be both exciting and stressful
- Stress can take a toll on your emotional well-being
- Up to 20% of women struggle with low moods or feeling overwhelmed during this time. Mood and anxiety disorders are the most common complications during these times
- When caught early, mood and anxiety disorders can be treated more effectively
- Knowledge about what to expect and what questions to ask your provider can help you have the healthiest pregnancy possible

When do I need this guide?

- You are thinking about becoming pregnant, are pregnant, or have had a baby, and you think you need help, but you are not sure what type of help you need
- You want to take steps to change the way you think, feel, and act, and you are pregnant or a new mom, and you want to know how to get help
- You think a pregnant or postpartum friend or family member may need help, but you are not sure what to do or how to help
- You are not pregnant but hope to become pregnant, and have been diagnosed with a mood and/or anxiety disorder and want to know how to manage your symptoms

Do I need help?

You might need support and help to manage the challenge of getting pregnant, being pregnant, or being a new mom if you:

- Are often under a lot of stress
- Feel sad, nervous, or overwhelmed, and you do not know how to cope with these feelings
- Would like to become pregnant, but currently take medication to manage your mood and are not sure if this is safe for pregnancy
- Have had problems with your mood during past pregnancies and/or after your other babies were born
- Have problems at work, school, or with your friends or family
- Use drugs or alcohol to cope
- Have family and friends who are worried about you

How do I get help?

- Read this guide to learn more about the role your behavioral health plays in getting pregnant, being pregnant, and being a new mom
- Reach out and ask questions
- Call one of our Behavioral Health Navigators at (512) 324-2039

What if I don't have insurance?

- If you do not have insurance, there may be options to make the cost of care more affordable
- Refer to the "Paying for Your Care" section on page 14 for more information on payment options for prenatal care and behavioral healthcare
- Call a Behavioral Health Navigator at (512) 324-2039

How can I help someone who needs behavioral health care?

- Refer to the "Helpful Information for Family and Friends" section on page 16.



PRECONCEPTION

What is preconception?

“Preconception” refers to the time before you become pregnant. If you are thinking about getting pregnant and have a behavioral health concern, preconception is a good time to make a behavioral health wellness plan.

What is preconception care?

Preconception care is the medical care you receive before you get pregnant. Preconception care will help you anticipate potential medical problems. Additionally, preconception care is an important part of caring for your behavioral health needs. Ensuring that you feel as well as possible before getting pregnant can significantly improve your well-being during and after pregnancy and positively impact the health of your baby.

Preparing for pregnancy

Whether you are trying to have a baby or just thinking about it, it is not too early to prepare for a safe pregnancy and a healthy baby. Discussing your behavioral health concerns with your medical providers is an important part of this process. If you are already pregnant, please refer to the “Pregnancy” section on page 5 or if you’ve already had your baby, please refer to the “Postpartum” section on page 8.

Questions you may have about caring for your behavioral health needs before you become pregnant

Should I stop taking my behavioral health medication?

- When you are trying to get pregnant and during your pregnancy, talk to your provider(s) about what medications (both prescribed and over the counter) are safe to take
- Make sure to tell your provider(s) about all the medications you are taking, especially if different providers are prescribing them. This is called “coordinating care”
- If, after talking to your provider(s), you decide to stop taking some or all of your medications, discuss a plan for how to do so safely and comfortably
- It is important to have a plan for how you will identify, cope with, and address behavioral health concerns should you decide to stop taking your medication(s) and your symptoms return; this may include seeing a therapist
- Ask your family and friends for extra support during this time

Can I drink alcohol, use drugs, and smoke cigarettes while I am trying to get pregnant?

- Some women take drugs and use alcohol to cope with feelings of stress, sadness, or being overwhelmed
- Many studies show that taking drugs or drinking alcohol negatively affects your growing baby
- If you currently drink alcohol or take drugs, talk to your provider(s) about creating a healthy lifestyle while you are trying to become pregnant
- Smoking can affect both you and your baby's health. If you are thinking about stopping, go to women.smokefree.gov for support
- Please see the "Helpful Information for Moms" section of this guide on page 11 for more guidance and resources to help you cope with the possible stress of pregnancy without drugs or alcohol

What if I am having a hard time getting pregnant?

- Sometimes it can take longer than expected to become pregnant
- If you are feeling worried, overwhelmed, or are experiencing stress about getting pregnant, it is important to talk with your provider and develop a plan to address your concerns
 - It's normal to feel shock, anger, sadness, frustration, low self-esteem, grief, and/or a sense of loss of control

- Know that this can also cause financial stress and stress in relationships
- Therapy can help you manage your feelings during this time
- There are many options for therapy, including counseling, mindfulness, relaxation techniques, and psychiatry
- Please refer to the "Helpful Information for Moms" section of this guide on page 11 for additional information

What kinds of things should I share with my provider?

- **If you are having thoughts about hurting yourself or someone else, go to your nearest Emergency Department or call 911 for help**
- If you are feeling sad, scared, or not in control of your life during this time, you may want to share this with your provider
- If worry and/or fear of getting pregnant is getting in the way of your normal activities, it is important to share this with your provider

How will I pay for my prenatal care?

- Please refer to the "What if I don't have insurance for prenatal care?" section of this guide on page 14 for more information on payment options
- Call a Behavioral Health Navigator at (512) 324-2039





PREGNANCY

You are pregnant. Congratulations! Pregnancy is often a joyful and exciting time in a woman’s life. It is also a time of physical, emotional, and social transition. While many women feel happy and excited about being pregnant, it is normal to experience some stress and worry in the face of a big life change.

If your pregnancy is unexpected, you may have mixed feelings. You may be experiencing fear of the unknown or worry because you did not expect to be pregnant. These feelings may or may not be mixed in with excitement about the pregnancy.

Whether your pregnancy was planned or not, sometimes worry, stress, and feeling overwhelmed can outweigh the excitement and affect your ability to function. Being prepared and aware of signs that you may need extra support will allow you to act quickly should you have behavioral health concerns.

What is prenatal care?

Prenatal is often referred to as the time frame from the very beginning stages of pregnancy to right after your baby is born. Prenatal care means getting the medical care you need during this time.

Questions you may have about finding a prenatal care provider

How do I choose a prenatal care provider?

- Whom you choose to provide your prenatal care is a personal decision
- It is important to choose a provider with whom you feel comfortable
- You may want to choose a provider who has experience working with women who have behavioral health concerns
- If you already have a gynecologist, you may wish to stay with this provider
- Ask a provider you trust (for example, your primary care provider or psychiatrist) for a referral
- If someone you know has an OBGYN that she likes, set an appointment with that OBGYN or ask her for a referral
- If you have insurance, call the customer service number on the back of your insurance card or go to the company’s website to get a list of providers that take your insurance
- If you do not have insurance, please see the “Helpful Information for Moms” section of this guide on page 11
- Call or search the Texas Medical Board and ask for a referral

What are my options for healthcare during my pregnancy?

There are a number of different providers of prenatal care.

Here is a list of the types of providers.

Credential	Qualifications and Services Provided
OBGYN	An OBGYN (Obstetrician and Gynecologist) is a provider who went to medical school and specializes in caring for women’s needs. Obstetricians care for women during their pregnancy and just after the baby is born. They also deliver babies and specialize in women’s reproductive health. A gynecologist cares for women when they are not pregnant. An OBGYN doctor is trained in both obstetric and gynecological care.
Certified Nurse-Midwife	A Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM) is a registered nurse who has graduated from a nurse-midwifery education program accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) and has passed a national certification exam. A CNM can care for you during pregnancy and can delivery your baby.
Certified Midwife	A Certified Midwife (CM) is an individual who has a background in a health-related field other than nursing and graduated from a midwifery education program accredited by ACME. Graduates of an ACME accredited midwifery education program take the same national certification examination as CNMs but receive the professional designation of certified midwife. A CM can also care for you during pregnancy and delivery of your baby.
Doula	A Doula is an individual who is trained and certified to provide physical, emotional, and informational support to the mother before, during, and just after birth. A doula can be certified as either a Birth Doula, a Postpartum Doula, or both, but doulas are not medical professionals. A Birth Doula helps to advocate for you during labor as well as offer support to you and your partner. A Postpartum Doula is available to help you with getting to know your baby’s needs — feeding, crying, soothing, and sleep as well as to support you and your physical and emotional recovery from giving birth.
Lactation Consultant	A Lactation Consultant is an individual who is trained and certified as a specialist in breastfeeding to help moms feed their babies. Most hospitals have lactation consultants, so if you decide you want to breastfeed, you can ask to speak with one after your baby is born. You can also find lactation consultants in private practice in the community. A quick Google search should provide you with some names.

Why is behavioral health important during pregnancy?

Your feelings are important. When you are pregnant, your emotional health can affect your physical health and the health of your baby. Pregnancy can be a time of a lot of emotional ups and downs. If you don't feel quite right or notice yourself feeling sad or worried a lot, and you can't find relief, it is important to talk to someone you trust — someone like your provider, a close friend, a clergy person, a therapist, and/or your psychiatrist.

Questions you may have about behavioral health and your pregnancy

Is it normal to be moody?

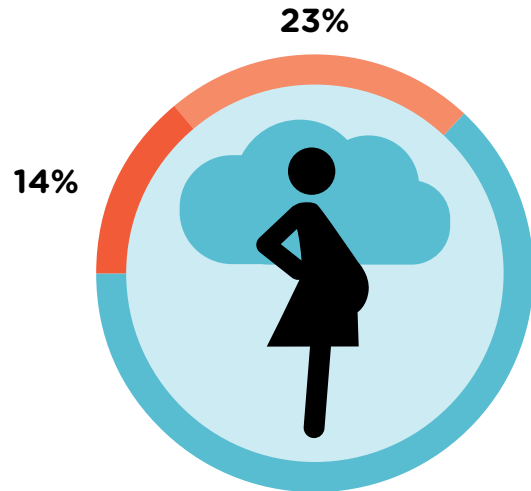
- It is normal to experience some irritability and mood swings during pregnancy, however, symptoms of a mood disorder during pregnancy are sometimes misidentified as normal hormonal changes
- If you find you are struggling to function, you are not sure how to cope, or you feel overwhelmed much of the time, it is important reach out to your provider and/or your support people to seek help

Is it normal to be so tired?

- Pregnancy can be exhausting. You may need more sleep than you do when you are not pregnant
- Lack of sleep can cause irritability and stress
- You may be going to a job and/or taking care of other children, and this can be very tiring and stressful
- Go to bed earlier or take naps if you can
- While you may have a lot to do every day and less energy than usual, it's important to remember to pay attention to caring for yourself and your behavioral health needs during your pregnancy
- If you notice you are not able to function most of the time because you are so tired, make sure to let your provider know

Is it normal to worry?

- It is normal to have some passing worries related to your pregnancy
- You may worry about the health of your baby, your changing body, or giving birth
- If you find your worries are getting in the way of doing things you normally do, your relationships, or your daily activities, it is important to reach out to someone you trust or a counselor



According to The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecology, **between 14% and 23%** of women suffer from some symptoms of depression during pregnancy.

What are some signs that the way I'm feeling is not normal during pregnancy?

If you have one or more of any of these, reach out to your provider for more guidance.

- Poor concentration
- Feelings of sadness that don't go away
- Feeling worthless or hopeless
- Feeling easily overwhelmed
- Not wanting to take care of yourself (struggling to bathe, brush your teeth, or do other self-care activities you normally do without any problem)
- Significant changes in how much you're eating, beyond the normal increase in appetite
- Loss of interest in things you normally like to do
- Thoughts of wanting to hurt yourself or someone else
- Thoughts of not wanting to be alive

How do I know it's time to reach out?

- **If you are having thoughts about wanting to hurt yourself or someone else, go to your nearest Emergency Department or call 911**
- If you experience any of the symptoms above for two weeks or more, it is important to let someone know



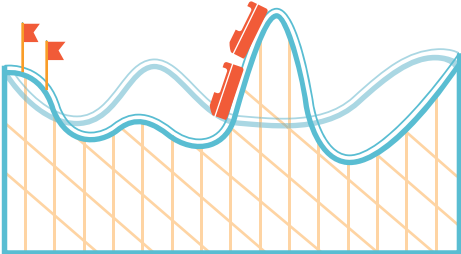
POSTPARTUM

Congratulations on having your baby! Being pregnant and having a baby can be a roller coaster of a time. Whether this is your first baby or not, it is normal to experience emotional highs and lows. In addition to feeling excited and happy to get to know your baby, you may also be feeling overwhelmed, tired, sad, irritable, nervous, or scared. For some moms, the negative feelings outweigh the good ones. If this is the case, seek help. Remember, depression and anxiety are common behavioral health complications during the postpartum period. The most important thing to keep in mind is that you do not have to suffer alone and that there is help.

Things you may be wondering about behavioral health after you have your baby

What are the “baby blues?”

- “Baby blues” is the term used to describe normal changes in your mood after your baby is born
- “Baby blues” are thought to be related to changes in hormones following birth
- “Baby blues” are NOT considered a behavioral health issue
- Up to 80% of women experience “baby blues” in the first week after their babies are born
- Feelings related to the “baby blues” usually peak 3-4 days after your baby is born
- “Baby blues” gets better on its own within about two weeks



Symptoms of “baby blues” are:

- Feeling very sensitive
- Feeling sad
- Crying easily
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling emotional highs and lows



What is the difference between feeling moody with normal hormone changes and having a behavioral health disorder?

- While normal hormonal changes cause ups and downs in your emotions, the changes don't last long
- The majority of hormonal shifts will likely be finished by the end of the second week after your baby is born
- If it's been more than two weeks since you had your baby and you're still having shifts in your mood, call your provider
- If you are feeling down, overwhelmed, or worried the majority of the day, and/or are struggling to find ways to lift your mood, talk to someone you trust and seek out support
- When in doubt, talk to your provider about changes in your mood

What are the things that may put me at risk for a postpartum behavioral health issue?

- Having a mood or anxiety disorder before pregnancy
- Behavioral health issues in your family
- Having PMDD (premenstrual dysphoric disorder) or severe PMS
- Unplanned or undesired pregnancy
- Severe morning sickness
- Infertility issues before pregnancy
- Grief and loss issues — especially around previous pregnancies and difficult births
- History of trauma and abuse
- History of using drugs or alcohol to cope
- Limited or no support
- Stress related to housing, food, finances, and/or employment
- Medical complications — experienced by either you or your baby — during pregnancy or after baby is born
- If your baby needs to stay in NICU

What are some signs that I might be experiencing a behavioral health issue?

- Sleeping a lot more or not being able to sleep
- Poor concentration
- Significant changes in your appetite and weight
- Feelings of sadness that don't go away
- Feeling worthless or hopeless
- Feeling easily overwhelmed
- Not wanting to take care of yourself
- Loss of interest in things you normally like to do
- Feeling disconnected from your baby
- Using drugs or alcohol to cope with your feelings
- Scary, unwanted thoughts of wanting to hurt yourself, your baby, or someone else
- Thoughts of not wanting to be alive
- Having difficulty knowing what is real, feeling like people are out to get you, hearing and/or seeing things that other people are not. *While these symptoms are rare, they are an emergency and need immediate professional attention. Call 911 or go to your nearest Emergency Department for help.*

How do I know it's time to reach out?

- **If you are having thoughts about wanting to hurt yourself or someone else, go to your nearest Emergency Department or call 911 for help**
- If you experience any of the symptoms above for two weeks or more, it is important to let someone know

How do I reach out?

- You may want to talk to a loved one, a friend, your OBGYN or midwife, a religious leader, or a counselor
- It is helpful to talk to someone you trust who can help connect you to the care you may need
- Call a Behavioral Health Navigator at (512) 324-2039

CALL A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NAVIGATOR MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY AT (512) 324-2039.



BREASTFEEDING AND WEANING

Choosing to breastfeed, use formula, or a combination of the two is a personal decision. There may be factors outside of your control that influence this decision. Your family and friends may also have opinions about what they think is best. The most important thing to remember is that you and your family should pick what works best for you. You may choose to consult with your baby's pediatrician or even a lactation consultant for more direction.

Questions you may have about your behavioral health care, breastfeeding, and weaning

Can I continue to take my medication if I am breastfeeding?

- Just as during pregnancy, some medications are safe to take while breastfeeding and some are not
- Talk to your provider(s) to come up with a plan to take care of your behavioral health needs while you breastfeed
- If you choose to breastfeed while on medication(s), it is important to talk with your provider about the risks and benefits of doing so
- If you choose to breastfeed, but decide to stop your medication(s), it is important to talk to your provider about the risks and benefits of doing so. Come up with a plan to manage your behavioral health symptoms, like seeing a therapist

What should I know about weaning and my behavioral health?

- Have a conversation with your baby's pediatrician and your OBGYN or lactation consultant for specific steps to take to stop breastfeeding, or wean
- Be aware that it is possible to experience low mood when weaning, so plan ahead
- Low mood is thought to be related to the changes in levels of hormones the body uses in making milk and nursing
- Low mood related to weaning usually goes away on its own; however, if you notice your mood is low after two weeks, reach out to your provider or call a Seton Behavioral Health Navigator at (512) 324-2039



Some symptoms to look for during or following weaning are:

- Sadness
- Irritability
- Tearfulness
- Mild depression
- Mood swings
- Changes in sleep

CALL A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NAVIGATOR MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY AT (512) 324-2039.



HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR MOMS

How to get help

The following information will help you learn how to get help and get the most out of treatment. Also, it will help you understand payment requirements and insurance, and how to plan ahead to care for yourself.

How do I get help?

- Plan ahead when possible: while you are feeling okay, make a list of your warning signs (how you know when things are not going well) and things you can do that help you feel better. Share this list with a trusted person
- Getting help starts by letting people know how you are really feeling
- Being depressed and/or anxious can cause you to feel alone so reach out to someone you trust: your partner, a family member, friend, OBGYN or other medical professional, or a clergy member. This person can help you figure out next steps
- If you do not have someone you can turn to or want to take the next steps on your own, call (512) 324-2039 during business hours to speak with a mental health professional
- Contact the local crisis line at (512) 472-HELP (4357)
- **If you are in crisis and need help right away, go to the nearest Emergency Department or call 911**

Why do I need help?

- There are several reasons to get help, but first and foremost: you deserve to feel as well as you can during your pregnancy and as a new mom
- Behavioral health issues can be treated and managed when you are connected to the right type of help
- If you are coping with your feelings by using drugs or alcohol (or you have cravings for drugs or alcohol), it is important to get help. Using drugs or alcohol during or after pregnancy can harm you and your baby
- Getting help for your behavioral health concerns is important to your health and well-being and that of your baby

What kind of help is available?

- There are many options available to support your behavioral health needs
- See page 12 to learn about these options, which range from online support groups to hospitalization



Types of behavioral health support

- Online support
- Spiritual support
- Support groups
- Individual therapy
- Couples counseling
- Group therapy
- Psychiatry
- Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)
- Residential treatment
- Hospitalization

Not sure where to start? Call a Behavioral Health Navigator at (512) 324-2039 for help and guidance.

What do all the letters after their names mean?

Credential	Therapy Provided
MD or DO Psychiatrist	A Psychiatrist is a medical provider who specializes in mental health and emotional issues. Psychiatrists are licensed by individual states as physicians to practice medicine. They may provide evaluations and treatments that may include therapy and medications. MD stands for Doctor of Medicine and DO stands for Doctor of Osteopathy. They are both doctors, but have different training.
PhD	A Psychologist has a doctoral degree, has completed two to three years of supervised post-providerate experience, and has passed a state licensing exam. A psychologist may offer individual therapy and psychological testing but cannot prescribe medication.
LCSW	A Licensed Clinical Social Worker has a master's degree in social work, has completed two to three years of supervised experience, and has passed a state licensing exam.
LMSW	A Licensed Master Social Worker has a master's degree in social work, and has passed a state licensing exam. An LMSW is supervised by an LCSW.
LPC	A Licensed Professional Counselor has a bachelor's degree, has a master's degree in counseling or a related field, has completed two to three years of supervised clinical experience, and has passed a state licensing exam.
LPC-I	A Licensed Professional Counselor Intern has a bachelor's degree, has a master's degree in counseling or a related field, has passed an initial state licensing exam, and is in the process of completing two to three years of supervised clinical experience. An LPC-I is supervised by an LPC.
LMFT	A Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist has a bachelor's degree, has a master's degree in marriage and family counseling or a related field, has completed two to three years of supervised clinical experience, and has passed a state licensing exam.
LCDC	A Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor has completed a minimum of 60 credit hours of education and 270 classroom hours of chemical dependency, has passed a written exam, and has completed an internship in the field of chemical dependency or has an approved degree.

CALL A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NAVIGATOR MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY AT (512) 324-2039.

HOW TO CHOOSE A PROVIDER AND GET THE MOST OUT OF TREATMENT

How do I choose a behavioral health provider?

- When looking for a psychiatrist, you can ask your OBGYN for a recommendation. You may also want to call your insurance company or a Seton Behavioral Health Navigator at (512) 324-2039 for referrals
- When deciding on a counselor, it is important to feel comfortable with the person you choose; you may want to attend at least three sessions to see if you and your therapist are a good fit
- Do not worry if the first therapist you meet with doesn't work out; it may take a few tries to find someone with whom you feel comfortable. This can be a normal part of the process
- Some counselors offer an intake appointment, either on the phone or in person; this is usually a 30-minute conversation to get to know one another a little and see if you'd like to work with each other
- If a counselor doesn't advertise an intake appointment service, don't be afraid to ask for it; seeking the right counselor is all about advocating for yourself, and this is a reasonable request

Ask questions like:

- How long have you been in practice?
- Do you help people with issues like mine?
- What kinds of treatments do you offer? Individual, groups, family, couples
- What theory do you work from? Can you explain that a bit to me?
- Do you focus more on past events or on current issues?
- Will my family participate in counseling, or only me?
- Can I bring my baby to the session?
- Do you take insurance? Do you have a sliding scale (cost of counseling based on your income)?
- How long does counseling last?
- What are your hours?



- What is your cancellation policy? Do I have to pay for sessions I miss?
- In an emergency, how can I reach you?

Some questions to ask yourself after meeting with the counselor

- Do I feel comfortable with this person?
- Do I think the counselor understands my concerns and is on the same page with me about the next steps?
- Do I feel confident the counselor knows how to help me heal?

How do I get the most out of treatment?

- Attend scheduled appointments
- Be open and honest with your provider(s)
- Participate actively and practice the things you are learning
- Follow up with your therapist's or provider's recommendations
- Take your medication as prescribed
- Bring up your questions or concerns
- Learn about making healthy choices to reduce stress, including changes to your sleep, diet, exercise, and relationships
- As needed, sign a release-of-information form for your family and friends to get them involved in your care

CALL A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NAVIGATOR MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY AT (512) 324-2039.



PAYING FOR YOUR CARE

Paying for behavioral health treatment

If you have insurance:

- The cost of treatment will depend on the type of treatment you need
- For outpatient appointments, such as seeing a therapist or a psychiatrist, expect to pay your co-pay or toward your deductible at each appointment
- For inpatient treatment, the hospital or facility will help check your insurance coverage before you are admitted; this is a good time to ask about payment plans
- For more information, contact your insurance company

If you are uninsured and need outpatient treatment:

- Some therapists offer sessions at a lower rate, called “sliding scale fees”; ask about this when you schedule an appointment
- In bigger cities, there are often nonprofit agencies that offer counseling services for the uninsured and underinsured
- Some programs may offer financial assistance or a payment plan; ask about this before you start treatment

- For referrals in Central Texas, call 211 or contact a Seton Behavioral Health Navigator at (512) 324-2039
- If you are uninsured and cannot pay the full fee to see a psychiatrist or therapist, most communities have state- or city-funded agencies, such as a Community Mental Health Center (CMHC), that may be able to help
- To find a CMHC, call 211 or search online
- In some cities you can find nonprofit agencies that offer low-cost counseling services
- Be aware that you may have to go through a screening process, and these agencies may have waiting lists
- Clinics often take Medicare, Medicaid, MAP (Travis County), and marketplace insurance plans
- For a referral or for more information about services in Central Texas, call 211 or contact a Seton Behavioral Health Navigator at (512) 324-2039

What if I don't have insurance for prenatal care?

For all questions regarding insurance coverage for pregnant women, call 211 to discuss your options.

CARING FOR YOURSELF HELPS YOU CARE FOR YOUR BABY

Is there anything I can do to plan ahead for my needs?

- Whether or not you have concerns about your behavioral health during or after your pregnancy, there are things you can do to feel better sooner
- If you are wondering if your thoughts and feelings may be signs of depression and anxiety, ask for help; please see the “How Do I Get Help?” section under “Helpful Information for Moms” in this guide on page 11
- Talk with your provider, your family, and your friends about how you are feeling; sometimes your support people may notice you may not be feeling well even before you do

What I can do to care for myself?

- Being pregnant and having a new baby is a major transition; you will have to adjust in many different ways
- It is important to remember to care for yourself so you can care for your baby
- Make a list of things you can do to feel better and share your list with your support people

Self-care ideas

- Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths
- Stretch
- Check in with yourself: are you hungry, thirsty, do you need to go to the bathroom?
- Take a shower or bath
- Listen to music
- Light a scented candle and enjoy the aroma
- Stay hydrated! Make sure to drink enough water
- Try not to get hungry; snack often
- Pray or meditate
- Take a walk outside with your baby, or leave baby at home with someone and walk on your own; research shows even light exercise can boost your mood
- Watch a funny movie or TV show, something that will make you laugh
- Keep a journal; write down your thoughts



- If you are able to leave the baby with someone, try to take some time for yourself, even if just a few minutes
- Accept help when help is offered and needed
- If you are able, try to nap when your baby does
- Write down some ideas that work for you and post them around your house as reminders

What if I sometimes get upset by my baby's crying?

- If you know your baby is fed, burped, and has a clean diaper, and your baby is still crying and cannot be soothed, it's okay to put your baby down in a safe place for a few minutes to collect yourself
- When you step away, take some slow, deep breaths with your eyes closed, or do something you enjoy; this will help to ground you, calm you, and put you in a better place, mentally and physically, to return to your baby
- Your baby may be crying harder once you put him or her down — that's okay — taking care of yourself is going to leave you in a much better frame of mind to care for your baby



HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

How can I help a pregnant woman or a new mom who needs behavioral health care?

You can help a loved one experiencing behavioral health issues in many ways.

Recognize a crisis

It can be hard to know when to get crisis or emergency care for your loved one. Here is what to look for:

- Any concern that she is at risk of hurting herself, her baby, or someone else
- If your loved one is hearing or seeing things that aren't real, struggling with knowing what is real or not, or is behaving in an aggressive way

Any of these symptoms is a sign of a crisis and requires immediate action. Call 911, or take her to the nearest Emergency Department to get her the care she needs.

If you are worried about your loved one, but not sure if she is in crisis, call either of the following numbers to talk to someone who can help:

- During business hours: Seton Behavioral Resource Navigation at (512) 324-2039 or
- Anytime: The local 24-hour, 7 day a week hotline at (512) 472-HELP (4357)

Recognize a need for more support

Being pregnant and having a new member in the family is a transition; some families get used to a new baby more easily, while others have a more difficult time. Loved ones and family members may notice that a pregnant woman or new mom might need help before she does. It is important to ask a new mom how she is doing. You don't have to have the answers, but asking the question can help. This gives her the chance to be open and honest about any struggles she may be having. Do not be afraid to reach out for help: when in doubt, call a professional. You might call her OBGYN, the baby's pediatrician, or the Seton Behavioral Health Care Resource Navigation Department at (512) 324-2039.

Provide support

Listen to a pregnant woman or new mom and encourage her to get the help she needs. Let her know that getting help is an important step toward feeling better.



CALL A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NAVIGATOR MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY AT (512) 324-2039.

Pregnancy and postpartum periods can be a physically and emotionally challenging time. Here are some ways you can provide support.

- Be patient. She may be struggling and have a hard time talking about her feelings
- Offer to make a call for help for her. Taking the first step can be hard but you can let her know there are trained professionals that can help
- Provide reassurance
- Provide extra help in caring for the baby
- Provide extra help with household tasks
- Provide support for helping a pregnant woman or new mom get as much sleep as she can

Respect confidentiality

In order for you to get information about a family member or friend's treatment, she will need to sign a consent for release of information that gives her provider permission to talk to you. Discuss this with your loved one before and during her treatment.

Coordinate care

Getting extra support or treatment can feel like work to a pregnant woman or a new mom. Here are some ways you can help.

- Offer to make appointments for her
- Offer to care for the baby while she goes to an appointment
- Offer to help her find a therapist or a support group
- Help her by getting information about what her insurance will cover and how much she will owe for treatment

Take care of yourself

Also remember yourself in this process; find support for yourself. Options include calling a Seton Behavioral Health Navigator at (512) 324-2039, talking to a therapist, reaching out to friends and family, or finding a support group. You may find that you are feeling more overwhelmed. This is normal, especially if you have a lot more to do, and you may not be sleeping enough. Whatever it may be, you deserve to feel happy, so ask for help yourself.





Words of encouragement for the new mom or mother-to-be

Being pregnant and having a new baby is a major life transition. It may take some time to adjust to all of the changes you will experience.

Remember, every pregnant woman and mom is different, and every baby is different. Try not to compare yourself to family members, friends, people you know on Facebook, or even other babies you've had. Your experience is valid and unique.

Family and friends may offer you advice or their opinions. It's important to remember that, while they are most likely coming from a place of love, these are only their suggestions. Take what you like and leave the rest. Do what works best for you and your family.

It's okay to ask for help. At Seton Behavioral Health, we're here to support you.





CALL A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NAVIGATOR MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY AT (512) 324-2039.