

# Patients - Communication

## Communicating with Your Provider

The period during and after pregnancy can be challenging for parents, but we want to remind you that you are not alone. Asking for help, specifically when it's related to our mental health, can be difficult for many of us due to the stigma that surrounds mental health in our society.

However, it's time to change this narrative because it is very common for parents to experience mental health concerns during and after pregnancy. Although asking for help can be hard, the outcomes that can arise are beneficial to both you and your baby!

If you have questions or concerns about changes you have noticed either mentally, physically, or behaviorally, we encourage you to share these observations with your doctor so that they can help you start feeling better.

### Before your appointment

Consider making a list of all the concerns you would like to address with your doctor. For example:

- "I've noticed I've been more irritable recently"
- "I've noticed I've had a loss of appetite"

If there are certain characteristics of a doctor that would help you be more open and honest during your appointment, call your doctor's office prior to your appointment and ask if it's possible to meet with a doctor who meets those characteristics. For example, you can ask if there's a doctor who is:

- Bilingual
- Dedicated to caring for trans/non-binary individuals
- A person of color and/or (insert gender) of color

If you know discussing these topics may be difficult, consider bringing a family member or friend to your appointment for support.

### During your appointment

Using the list you prepared before the appointment...

- Share with your doctor how you've been feeling and how long you've been feeling this way.
- Share with your doctor how these changes have impacted your daily life
- Example: "Nearly every day I find myself feeling nauseous, which really has decreased my appetite. Most days I only eat a small lunch. Should I be worried?"

Don't be afraid to ask questions. The more information you have, the less you have to worry about! The answers to your questions will help you better understand how you can start feeling better. If you need to, consider taking notes during your appointment. Some example questions:

- "How do you usually treat this problem?"
- "Do you have any resources (websites, books, printed materials) that you can give me that will help me better

understand my problem?”

- “I’ve never taken medications before. Will I be on them forever and are they okay for my baby?”
- “Before I try medications, are there other alternatives for treatment like therapy or holistic practices that could help me?”
- “If I have more questions after the appointment, how can I contact you?”

## After your appointment

Review any materials you were given during the appointment

If you were prescribed medication during your appointment...

- Be sure to schedule a follow-up appointment with your doctor so they can assess if the medication is working
- Be aware that the first medication you try might not work. Each person responds to medication differently, so you and your doctor might have to try different medications before finding the right one.
- Contact your doctor if your symptoms worsen.

Follow through on your treatment plan! This may mean scheduling an appointment with a specialist or therapist and/or making recommended lifestyle changes.