

# SCREENING FOR POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION IN THE WELL-CHILD VISIT

## Steps for the pediatric clinician when the parent screens “positive”

It is recommended that WELL-CHILD visits include screening of the birthing partner, and if possible, their partner. Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMAD) adversely impacts the parent as well as the offspring. Among the problems caused by PMADs that effect the parent-infant dyad and the family are:

1. Impairment of bonding and the development of a healthy attachment.
2. alter the parent’s understanding of the infant’s behavior
3. prevent the parent from developing appropriate sensitivity to her child, causing the development of indifference.
4. Damage parental awareness and judgment regarding health and safety.

PEACE for Moms recommends that pediatricians administer either the Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Scale (EPDS) or the PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire) to the parent during the infant’s well-child visits at 1, 2, 4, and 6 months of age.

Interpreting Screening Tools		
	PHQ-9	EPDS
Not Depressed	<5	<8
Mild Depression	5-9	9-13
Moderate Depression	10-14	14-18
Severe Depression	>16	>19
Self-Harm/Suicide Screening	Question #9	Question #10

*For all parents with a positive screen, first determine risk:*

1. If there is a crisis or safety concern or the parent gave a positive response on the EPDS or PHQ-9 self-harm question, refer to the parent’s local mental health emergency service or emergency room. The parent should not be left alone; older children should NOT be given the responsibility of sitting with the depressed parent. Ideally someone should accompany the parent(s) to emergency services.

2. If the parent is not in need of emergency evaluation and is already in mental health treatment or has access to a mental health provider (e.g., someone they have used in the past), refer the patient to that individual. With parent’s consent, notify that mental health provider of the results of the depression screening test.

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## Steps for the pediatric clinician when the parent screens “positive”

3. If the parent is not in need of emergency evaluation but the parent does not already have a mental health provider:

- a. Refer the parent to a community mental health provider and give the parent information about community resources such as support groups.
- b. If you require assistance obtaining community resources and mental health providers for your patient, reach out to PEACE for Moms <http://www.peace4momsga.org>, or 470-977-3223. When you call, we recommend that you have the parent’s insurance information and their county of residence. This will allow our community advisors to help coordinate care.
- c. If the patient requires additional resources (especially those impacting social determinants of health) the patient should be referred to the Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies resource portal <https://www.resourcehouse.com/hmhb/>
- d. Discuss referral recommendations with the patient. With consent of the patient notify the parent’s PCP and/or OB/GYN for monitoring and follow-up. You may recommend that the PCP or OB/GYN call PEACE for Moms if he or she has clinical questions.
- e. It may be helpful to send a copy of the letter to the parent’s obstetric or primary care clinician. Again, please obtain the parent’s consent before making contact in a non-emergent situation. Only a few details need be entered before the letter can be sent via fax, mail or email. You may also wish to send a copy of the screening test with the letter.

4. If you are concerned about the parent keeping the referral, consider calling in a week to verify that the parent followed through. If your practice has a care coordinator, follow up should be a routine part of your practice workflow.

5. Engage natural supports and encourage parent to utilize them. Most likely you will have only one parent in the office when a PPD screen is positive. A depressed parent who is alone or feeling alone is at higher risk for suicide. It is important for someone else in the parent’s life to be aware of the presence of depression and be able to step in to help. With the parent’s consent, notify natural supports. This is an excellent time to screen for domestic violence to ensure that the natural support is appropriate.

6. Remember that you can always call PEACE for Moms if you have additional questions or concerns.