

TALKING TO
YOUR PROVIDER ABOUT
Perinatal Anxiety



Talking to Your Provider

Tips for Talking About Perinatal Anxiety with a Provider

Talking about your mental health can be challenging and there can be fear of being judged or misunderstood. In fact, a lot of people do not feel comfortable talking with their providers about their emotions and mental health. Here are some tips to help you take steps to have and normalize the conversation.

1. Acknowledge the Transition into Parenting

- Ask yourself the question: *“Is the transition into parenthood meeting my expectations?”*
 - The transition into parenting can come with a lot of changes. Some of those changes you may not have control over. It is important to acknowledge your feelings about these changes as they come up. Acknowledging your feelings will help to normalize the experience and make it easier to talk about.

2. Build a Meaningful Relationship with Your Provider

- Next, time you meet with your provider start the conversation by saying *“I want to get to know you better?”*, *“Why did you decide to be a doctor?”* or *“What led you to specialize in OB/GYN?”*
 - The conversation does not have to always be centered on you! Feel free to ask your provider questions about themselves to help break the ice, get to know your provider more, and make you feel more comfortable.

3. Centering Your Mental Health During a Prenatal Visit

- Use your visits to talk about your total well-being, which includes your mental health. Try using one of the following topics to talk about any anxieties, or emotions you are experiencing.
 - How you are feeling that day
 - How you have been feeling between now and the last time you met with your doctor
 - Any concerns you have about your mood or changes in your mood
 - Topics you have seen or heard in the news or other media platforms and how those are impacting your health and feelings

Talking to Your Provider

4. Take Actions Into Your Own Hands

- Remember that the time after giving birth is not the only time that you may experience anxiety or depression. Asking the right questions now can help jump-start the conversation.
 - Ask for a mental health screening well before your child is born. This screening can assess if you have risk factors for mental health conditions well before you give birth.
 - Ask your provider directly for a referral to therapeutic services. Tell your provider you would like to speak to someone about your anxiety and how you are feeling.

Discussing your emotional and mental health with your provider throughout your pregnancy will help them to identify any shifts in your emotional wellbeing over time. These could be shifts you may not even recognize or have words for yourself yet. Normalizing discussions about perinatal anxiety will ultimately get you the best care that you need and deserve.



These materials were developed by ACOG with funding through a Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Award (EA #14226)