Transcript Details
This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: https://reachmd.com/programs/advances-in-womens-health/breastfeeding-postpartum-mental-health/56557/

ReachMD
www.reachmd.com
info@reachmd.com
(866) 423-7849

How Breastfeeding Experiences Influence Postpartum Mental Health

Announcer:
You're listening to *Advances in Women's Health* on ReachMD. On this episode, Dr. Erin Henshaw will share insights on the role of breastfeeding challenges in postpartum depression. She's a licensed clinical psychologist and a Professor in the Department of Psychology at Denison University in Ohio. Let's hear from Dr. Henshaw now.

Dr. Henshaw:
Mothers who are experiencing breastfeeding challenges may experience a lot of things that could then lead to breastfeeding predicting the onset of depressive symptoms. For example, commonly experienced breastfeeding challenges include pain, difficulty latching, having low milk supply concerns, and feeling pressure to maintain exclusive breastfeeding despite those challenges.

Sometimes we also see that mothers have a mismatch of their expectations of how they believe they're going to feel—or should feel—about breastfeeding in particular and parenting generally, and the reality of the demands of caring for an infant. Some of the pain, boredom, exhaustion, or other feelings that a mother might have and feeling this inconsistency between expectations and reality can drive a feeling of guilt or a feeling of inadequacy. And that cognitive theme of feeling inadequate or feeling less than can then become something of a vulnerability for depression.

And then the last piece is that when we think about support for breastfeeding and support for maternal mental health, when women have full support for both of those things, that's very protective. But we also can see that there are situations in which a lack of support—either lack of clinical support, such as lactation consulting, available nurse practitioners, or available pediatric support, or thinking about lack of social support, like family members not supporting breastfeeding or family members not being able to sort of offset some of the demands of breastfeeding and help in other areas. All of these things can lead to a building set of risk *or* a building set of protection against the likelihood of depression.

Announcer:
That was Dr. Erin Henshaw explaining how breastfeeding challenges and supportive factors can impact maternal mental health. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit *Advances in Women's Health* on ReachMD.com, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!

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