



UK NSC screening for antenatal and postnatal mental health problems recommendation

Following a review of the evidence against strict criteria, the UK NSC does not currently recommend screening for antenatal and postnatal mental health problems.

More than 80,000 women per year in the UK might experience mental health problems during pregnancy and soon after.

Such problems include various types of depression and anxiety. They can affect women in different ways and need different types of treatment and support.

If untreated, these problems can harm the woman, her baby and her family. They can also cause long term problems for children throughout their childhood or later in life. The aim of a screening programme in pregnancy would be to reduce the possibility of these problems.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

This evidence summary concluded that even if common mental health problems during pregnancy, and soon after, cause harm to the mother and her child, there is a lack of evidence on the effectiveness of screening tests in identifying all such conditions.

Also, the evidence on the efficacy of treatments is not good enough to make recommendations. It is not clear which of the treatments work well for different common mental health problems before and after giving birth.

Currently, mental health services in the UK are not fully implementing the guidance on how to look after these women. Most pregnant women are asked about their mental health, but the help offered varies across services.

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations on screening for different conditions in the light of new research evidence becoming available.

To find out more about the UK NSC's antenatal and postnatal mental health problems recommendation, please visit:

<https://legacyscreening.phe.org.uk/postnataldepression>
<https://legacyscreening.phe.org.uk/psychiatricillness>

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises ministers and the NHS in the 4 UK countries about all aspects of screening and supports implementation of screening programmes.

Find out more about the UK National Screening Committee at www.gov.uk/uknsc. The UK NSC evidence review process is described at www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process and a list of all UK NSC recommendations can be found at legacy.screening.nhs.uk/recommendations

The UK NSC secretariat is hosted by Public Health England (www.gov.uk/phe).