



# PERINATAL SUPPORT WASHINGTON

## Miscarriage and Postpartum Depression: Conflicting Evidence

A study published in June 2015 in the [\*Maternal and Child Health Journal\*](#) found that women who experienced miscarriages were not more vulnerable to depression during subsequent pregnancies or for six to 12 months after delivery. This is in contrast to a body of earlier research, which identified a link between pregnancy loss and postpartum depression.

Researchers at Pennsylvania State University surveyed 2,800 women by phone, asking about depressive symptoms during their last trimester and again at one, six, and 12 months after delivery. About one in six of the women had had at least one previous miscarriage. The researchers found that 5% of women who had a miscarriage experienced depressive symptoms in the third trimester of a subsequent pregnancy - a rate similar to the women who had not had a miscarriage. And although more women who miscarried experienced depressive symptoms one month after giving birth (5% compared with 3% of the women who had not had a miscarriage), by six and 12 months postpartum the rates of depression for both groups evened out at 4%.

While these results are reassuring, previous researchers urge caution, lest the research methods used here lead to an underestimation of the impact of previous miscarriages on subsequent pregnancies. Emma Robertson Blackmore, PhD, a psychologist at the University of Florida, points out that women who agree to participate in long-term studies tend to be struggling less, and that telephone interviews are not as reliable as face-to-face interviews. In addition, researchers interviewed women during their third trimester, which is after the point at which previous pregnancy losses occurred.

In her own research, Robertson Blackmore found that women who experienced a pregnancy loss were at higher risk of depression and anxiety during a subsequent pregnancy, and for up to three years after the birth of a healthy child.

Kinsey, C. B., Baptiste-Roberts, K., Zhu, J., & Kjerulff, K. H., (2015). Effect of previous miscarriage on depressive symptoms during subsequent pregnancy and postpartum in the first baby study. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 19(2), 391-400.

Abstract: <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10995-014-1521-0>