

Domestic Violence During Pregnancy

What is it?

- Domestic violence during pregnancy is when physical, sexual, mental or emotional violence is directed towards a pregnant woman.
- It can also just be threats of physical or sexual violence such as, someone keeping track of how many miles you have driven your car, not allowing you to call your family or friends, or not being allowed to use the cell phone
- There is an increase in violence towards a woman when she is pregnant. The most common reason is the father/partner feels more stressed because a baby is coming.
- The man's stress gets directed to the source of the new baby, the mom!
- Pregnant teens have a higher risk of violence from their partners.
- When a couple didn't plan the pregnancy, the new mom is four times more likely to suffer increased abuse.
- It may be that your pregnancy was not something you had wanted. It may have been because you were raped or not allowed to use birth control.
- If you are living with violence you might feel very scared, anxious, or panic easily. You might feel guilty, depressed or ashamed.
- Sometimes a woman doesn't want to get help because she is embarrassed or afraid her partner will get even madder.
- You might feel that it is hopeless and no one can help you and your baby. You are stuck living this way.

What does this do to me and my baby?

- Domestic violence makes the mom have more stress and depression. She may turn to things like tobacco, drugs and alcohol. These actions all harm the baby's growth and development.
- If you are depressed you can have a loss of interest and not take as good care of yourself as you should. You might miss prenatal appointments or not take your vitamins.
- If a man abuses his partner he is also likely to abuse his children

What do I need to do?

- Admit there is a problem.
- If you think you are being abused in any way, talk to a trained person such as a counselor, social worker or doctor. Make a plan to get to a safe place.
- Talk to your doctor, your health plan case manager or call a crisis hotline.
- One place to go to is the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE) or <http://www.thehotline.org>. They can help you come up with your plan to be safe.
- Help is out there. Be strong for you and your baby.