



TEN STEP TUESDAY

# Breastfeeding and Maternal Mental Health

## It's Ten Step Tuesday!

**May is Maternal Mental Health Month. Breastfeeding has been shown to have positive impacts on maternal mental health. Some benefits may include:**

- decreased symptoms of depression
- decreased symptoms of anxiety
- decreased maternal stress responses
- decreased sleep loss and fatigue
- increased mother-infant bonding and attachment
- increase in factors which are protective against postpartum depression, such as maternal self-efficacy



Postpartum depression may be associated with early cessation of breastfeeding, which in turn can have an additional effect on maternal mental health and worsen depression. It is important to screen for postpartum depression in all mothers and provide resources, treatment, and support as needed.

For some families, breastfeeding difficulties and experiences that do not meet their plans and expectations can also contribute to feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress. Evaluating the support needs of each individual family can help determine the best course of action.

**Skin-to-skin contact is also associated with decreased cortisol levels, the “stress hormone.” All parents can take advantage of the benefits of skin-to-skin time (not just breastfeeding parents)!**

*Reference:*

Tucker, Z., & O'Malley, C. (2022). *Mental Health Benefits of Breastfeeding: A Literature Review*. *Cureus*, 14(9), e29199. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.29199>

**For more information contact**

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