



Being pregnant and having a baby when you have a disability

Resource for Parents



If you have a disability and you're going to have a baby, you might wonder where to find information.

Here are some things researchers have learned about **helping pregnant people and new parents with disabilities.**



Things that people said helped them when they were having a baby

Researchers have learned that **these things can make a difference** when people with disabilities have a baby:



Speaking up for yourself and **getting help from someone you trust** and people who work in health care (like doctors and nurses).



Having people show you what to do and how to do it, like how to care for and feed your baby.



Getting help at home from midwives and public health nurses.



When everyone on your health care team **works together**.

What makes it hard when you are pregnant and you have a disability

But, there are hard things too, like:



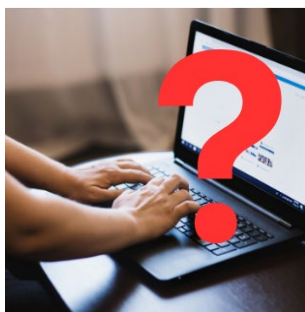
When people who work in health care **don't understand disabilities.**



When you **can't get around or use health care equipment** because of your disability.



When **you can't understand** what people who work in health care are saying to you, or when the different people who work in health care **are telling you different things.**



When you **can't find information** about disability and pregnancy.

What makes it hard when you are pregnant and you have a disability

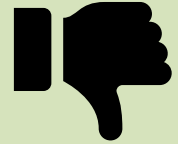
Most people with disabilities have healthy pregnancies. But compared to people without disabilities, they can have more health problems.

Good pregnancy care can help so these health problems don't happen.



What makes it hard when you are pregnant and you have a disability

Here are some **health problems** that can happen more if you have a disability:



Going to the emergency room when you are pregnant or after you have a baby.



Getting very sick when you are pregnant or after you have a baby and having to **stay in the hospital**.



Other problems like **feeling very depressed after having a baby** (“postpartum depression”).



Problems when the baby is born like being born too early.

What you can do

People with disabilities and people who work in health care have great ideas about how to make care easier when you are pregnant and after having a baby.

Here are some things that might help:



Think ahead

It is great to talk to your **doctor** or **midwife** about being pregnant and **ask questions**.



What you can do

2

Get someone to help you organize everyone and everything



It can be hard when there are many different people helping and **they don't know what each other is doing.**



It can help to have someone, like a case worker, to **keep everyone organized and share information** so everyone understands what is happening.

What you can do

3

Make a birth plan

A birth plan talks about:



How you want things to go when you have a baby.



What is **important** to you.



What should happen if there is an **emergency**.

What you can do

4

Ask for help

It is **okay to ask for help.**



It is important that if you need things **explained differently** or you need **special equipment** because of your disability, that people help you.

5

Find a community

It makes a big difference when you have **other people who understand** what you are going through and can **be there for you.**



This might be your **friends** or **family**, or it could be a **support group** of other parents.

This information is in a resource published by an organization called the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health:

Title: Pregnancy and Postpartum Care: Resource for Parents with Disabilities

Authors: Hilary K. Brown, Lesley A. Tarasoff, Kate Welsh, Laurie Proulx, and Yona Lunsky, on behalf of the Disability and Pregnancy Study and in collaboration with the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health

Our project was funded by an organization called the National Institutes of Health.

We thank the Health Care Access Research and Developmental Disabilities Program (H-CARDD) staff and the self-advocate advisors who worked together with our team to create this document.



Health Care Access Research
and Developmental Disabilities

camh

Azrieli Adult
Neurodevelopmental Centre