Ep. 97 – More Than Diapers: How Diaper Need Affects Maternal Mental Health

Diapers are something many families need every single day, yet diaper need remains a hidden struggle affecting millions of parents and babies across the United States. In this episode of The MotherToBaby Podcast, host Chris Stallman, MS, CGC, speaks with Dr. Megan V. Smith from the National Diaper Bank Network about the growing body of research connecting diaper need to infant health, maternal mental health, and overall family wellbeing.

Dr. Smith discusses how limited access to clean diapers can contribute to increased stress, anxiety, feelings of shame, and depressive symptoms among parents, while also affecting infant health through increased diaper rash and related infections. The conversation also explores how financial hardship and unmet basic needs can impact both parents and babies during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

Listeners will also learn about available resources and the important work being done to support families experiencing diaper need.

About Our Guest:
Dr. Megan V. Smith is Chief of Innovation and Impact at the National Diaper Bank Network and a nationally recognized leader in maternal and child health, public health, and mental health equity. She published one of the first peer-reviewed studies on diaper need and its impact on child and maternal health.

Learn more about the National Diaper Bank Network:
https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/

For evidence-based information about exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding, visit MotherToBaby:
https://mothertobaby.org/

Questions about exposures during pregnancy or breastfeeding? Contact a MotherToBaby specialist by phone, text, live chat, or email:
https://mothertobaby.org/contact-expert/.

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at MotherToBaby.org.

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The weeks after delivery (often called the fourth trimester) can raise just as many questions as pregnancy itself. From pain management and supplements to beauty treatments and mental health medications, many parents are unsure how different exposures may affect breastfeeding.

In this episode of The MotherToBaby Podcast, host Chris Stallman, MS, CGC, is joined by Kirstie Perrotta, MPH, and Angela Messer, MS, Teratogen Information Specialists from MotherToBaby California, to discuss some of the most common postpartum questions they receive from parents and healthcare providers.

Together, they explain how exposure information is evaluated during breastfeeding and how factors like dose, timing, and route of exposure influence what may reach breast milk.

In This Episode, You'll Learn:

- What the fourth trimester is and why exposure questions continue after delivery
- Common postpartum concerns, including pain medications, stool softeners, and laxatives
- How prescription pain medications, including opioids, are evaluated during breastfeeding
- Why route of exposure matters when considering topical products
- What to know about hair dye, Botox, manicures, facials, and salon treatments
- Why supplements, herbal products, and proprietary blends raise additional questions

- Which over-the-counter medications are often discussed in the breastfeeding period
- How medication guidance can differ between pregnancy and lactation
- Why addressing postpartum mental health conditions is essential
- Common breastfeeding myths and misconceptions
- Practical tips to reduce direct infant contact with topical products

Key Takeaways:

- Many medications have data available for use during breastfeeding
- Topical products are typically evaluated based on how they are applied and absorbed
- High-dose supplements and proprietary blends often lack breastfeeding data
- Postpartum pain, mental health, and chronic conditions deserve appropriate treatment
- Feeding decisions are personal, and there is no single approach that works for everyone

Resources Mentioned:

- MotherToBaby.org – evidence-based fact sheets, Baby Blogs, podcasts, and educational resources
- Over 300 fact sheets in English and Spanish on medications, exposures, and health conditions
- One-on-one support via phone, chat, text, or email
- MotherToBaby Pregnancy Studies – helping expand knowledge about medications, conditions, and exposures in pregnancy and lactation

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Psychiatric nurse practitioner, Becky Spencer, PhD, APRN, PMHNP-BC, IBCLC, PMH-C, FILCA joins host Chris Stallman, CGC, to talk about maternal mental health, how common postpartum mental health challenges are and what to do to get help.

Resources mentioned in this episode:

Postpartum Support International

MotherToBaby Maternal Mental Health Hub

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In this special episode, MotherToBaby Podcast host, Chris Stallman, CGC, introduces listeners to Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) an evidence-based, community health program with 45 years of research showing significant improvements in the health and lives of first-time moms and their children affected by social and economic inequality. Guests, Marie James and Savannah Bertrand, talk about the impact NFP has had on their lives and how the parents can find a local NFP nurse where they live.

Marie James, MHA, MHEd, BSN, RN has more than 30 years of clinical, public health and program administrative experience. She currently serves as a Senior Manager, Nursing Practice with the National Service Office for Nurse-Family Partnership and Child First.

Savannah Bertrand, an NFP Parent Ambassador, was introduced to Western Wisconsin Nurse-Family Partnership Consortium in 2019 by her local WIC office after becoming pregnant with her second child and disclosing pre-existing mental health issues. Savannah says her NFP nurse gave her confidence to take care of her own mental health plus the reassurance that she would be an excellent parent.

To watch this episode on YouTube, click here.

Resources mentioned in this episode:

Nurse Family Partnership

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