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## TOKOPHOBIA

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### INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy and childbirth are an outstanding life events for every woman. While it can be a time of great joy, it can also be a source of stress and anxiety among women. They frequently worry about the normal pain of childbirth and about the possibility of something going wrong. These are all normal human phenomenon that almost all pregnant women experience to some degree. However, this fear can become pathological and so severe that women will avoid getting pregnant or giving birth altogether.

### TOKOPHOBIA

In 2000, the term tokophobia was introduced in the medical literature. The word is derived from the Greek tokos, meaning childbirth and phobos, meaning fear.

Tokophobia is the fear of pregnancy and childbirth. Women who have this phobia have a pathological fear of giving birth, and will often avoid becoming pregnant or giving birth altogether. This fear may lead women to avoid becoming pregnant, even though they want to have children, or to conclude for a Caesarean section in order to avoid vaginal delivery.

### CAUSES

There are number of reasons to regard for the development of tokophobia. Some of these including hearing about traumatizing accounts of childbirth experiences from other women, fear of inadequate pain management, and pre-existing psychiatric conditions such as anxiety and depression.

### SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of tokophobia can include disturbed sleeping pattern, panic attacks, nightmares, and avoidance behaviors.

Other symptoms might include:

- Anxiety and depression
- Extreme fear of birth defects, stillbirth, or maternal mortality
- Feelings of dread at the thought of pregnancy and birth
- Prefer Caesarean section for birth
- Women may sometimes avoid sexual activity out of fear of getting pregnant.
- Those who do become pregnant may be more likely to request an elective c-section, feel greater trauma surrounding the birth, and may even have difficulty bonding with their baby.

## TYPES

There are two different types of tokophobia:

- **Primary tokophobia** - It occurs in women who have never experienced childbirth. It may begin during adolescence, although it can also occur after a woman has become pregnant. It may also be seen in girls and women who have been sexually assaulted or raped. Medical examinations during pregnancy and delivery may also trigger flashbacks of the original trauma.
- **Secondary tokophobia** - It occurs in women who have previously experienced pregnancy and child birth. It is often the result of traumatic labor and birth. However, it can also occur in women who had normal, non-traumatic births, as well as women who have experienced miscarriage, stillbirth, pregnancy termination, or failed fertility treatments.

## RISK FACTORS

- Fear for the life of the newborn and/or a lack of trust in medical practitioners
- Fear of birth-related complications, such as preeclampsia and death
- Fear of pain
- Fear of the unknown, loss of control and privacy
- Having a history of anxiety, depression, or childhood sexual abuse
- Hearing traumatic birth stories from friends or on social media
- Hormonal changes that make it harder to manage anxiety
- Psychosocial factors like getting pregnant at a young age, being impoverished, or lack of social support
- Uncertainty over the labor and birth process

## DIAGNOSIS

Tokophobia is frequently diagnosed during healthcare provider visits for other reasons.

**Women who aren't pregnant:** During annual exams, healthcare providers ask about contraception and plans to start a family. This is an excellent opportunity to discuss our concerns about childbirth.

**Women who are pregnant:** Regular prenatal exams include questions about mental health. Answering these questions honestly helps healthcare providers to detect tokophobia.

## MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT

It's important that women with tokophobia admit treatment in order to insure that both the mother and child are healthy. This can include entering support from the woman's obstetrician in collaboration with a psychologist or psychiatrist.

**Therapy:** Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a common tokophobia treatment. Undergoing CBT helps to identify the aspects of childbirth that are fueling the phobia. Learn healthy coping methods with the guidance of a mental health professional also helpful.

**Antidepressants:** Antidepressants can help if depression is present. These drugs balance brain chemicals responsible for regulating mood.

**Hypnotherapy:** Hypnotherapy uses focused relaxation to achieve a heightened sense of awareness. While in this state, a mental health provider helps to explore subconscious studies.

**Stress reduction:** Yoga, meditation and other relaxation techniques helps to relax mind. This may also provides feel more confident about childbirth.

**Support:** Finding sources of social support is important. Such support can strengthen women's sense of self-efficacy and even reduce the number of elective c-sections. Effective support can occur one-on-one or through support groups. Such support is often provided by people that women already know, such as family member or friends, but it can also come from obstetricians, midwives, psychologists, or counselors.

**Begin Forming a Birth Plan:** Talk to the doctor about our wants and needs, including options for pain management and giving birth. Having a plan and choosing the method of delivery can help to feel more empowered and in control.

**Avoid Childbirth "Horror Stories" :** Hearing similar stories can complicate tokophobia. rather, seek out good medical information and concentrate on positive experiences with childbirth. However, it's impeccably respectable to ask them to stop, If people try to partake stories that you don't want to hear.

**Take a Antenatal Support Class :** Learning about what happens during parturition and different styles may helps to manage labor pain can help to feel more able as your approach giving birth.

## PREVENTION

While tokophobia can't be prevented, there are several ways to reduce its influence in our life. It's natural to be fearful about parturition. But this doesn't have to hold us back from starting or expanding our family. If sense anxious, it's never too early to discuss our concerns with our healthcare provider.

## CONCLUSION

While tokophobia is rare, it can have a major impact on a woman's life and functioning. Proper support and treatment can address the fears that women may have surrounding pregnancy and delivery, making it possible to manage symptoms and have a healthy gestation and positive birth experience.

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