

Mental Health Across the Lifespan Initiative

Postpartum Depression

A Public-Private Partnership between the
National Institutes of Health and
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.



National Institute
of Mental Health



A New Arrival...

What words can be used to describe the feelings a woman may have in the weeks following the birth of a child?



A New Arrival...

Overwhelming

Anxious

Exhausting

Postpartum Depression



Today's Basics

Postpartum Depression...

- Does not occur because of something the mother does or does not do;
- Can affect any woman regardless of race, age, social, economic, or educational background; and can occur with any pregnancy (i.e., first, second, etc.);
- Can be effectively treated by a health professional; friends and family can help.



What is Postpartum Depression?

Postpartum depression is a mood disorder that can affect women shortly before or soon after childbirth.

What Causes Postpartum Depression?

Factors that may cause postpartum depression include:

- Dramatic shifts in hormone levels (estrogen and progesterone) in a woman's body after childbirth;
- Increased responsibilities for the mother including home and work duties leading to sleep deprivation and physical discomfort and exhaustion.

What are the Symptoms of Postpartum Depression?

Common symptoms of postpartum depression include:

- Feeling sad, hopeless, empty, or overwhelmed
- Crying more often than usual, or for no apparent reason
- Worrying or feeling overly **anxious**
- Feeling moody, **irritable, or restless**; experiencing anger or rage
- Oversleeping or being unable to sleep, even when her baby is asleep
- Having trouble concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Losing interest in activities that are usually enjoyable, **withdrawing from or avoiding friends and family**
- Suffering from physical aches and pains, including frequent headaches, stomach problems, and muscle pain
- Eating too little or too much
- Having **trouble bonding** or forming an emotional attachment with her baby
- Persistently doubting her ability to, or not being able to care for her baby
- Thinking about harming herself or her baby

Baby Blues vs. Postpartum Depression



Baby Blues

- Affects 80% of mothers
- Mild feelings of worry, unhappiness, and fatigue
- Begins fairly soon after delivery and lasts 1-2 weeks
- Symptoms go away on their own

Postpartum Depression

- Occurs in 15% of births
- Feelings of sadness and anxiety can be moderate or severe
- Often begins 1 week to 1 month after delivery and is persistent
- Symptoms do not go away on their own



Postpartum Psychosis

Psychosis is a mental disorder characterized by symptoms such as delusions or hallucinations, that indicate impaired contact with reality.

- Postpartum psychosis is a rare disorder that occurs in approximately 1 in 1000 births.
- Sudden onset of severe and intense symptoms occur 1-2 weeks after childbirth.
- Requires immediate attention from a health professional.
- A 5% infanticide and suicide rate is associated with this disorder.



Is it Postpartum Depression or Something Else?

- A health professional can determine if a woman has postpartum depression.
- A woman who is experiencing symptoms should see a health professional right away.

Postpartum depression can affect any woman regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or economic status.

Who is at Risk?

Women who have:

- Had postpartum depression with a previous pregnancy;
- Experienced depression or experienced bipolar disorder at another time in life;
- Family history of depression or other mental illness;
- Medical complications during childbirth or a stressful life event during pregnancy or shortly after childbirth.
- Mixed feelings about pregnancy, lack of strong emotional support;
- Alcohol or other drug abuse.



Review:

1. Is postpartum depression the result of something a woman does or does not do?

Yes or No



Review:

1. Is postpartum depression the result of something a woman does or does not do?

NO



Review:

2. Are wealthy, educated women of childbearing age at risk for postpartum depression?

Yes or No



Review:

2. Are wealthy, educated women of childbearing age at risk for postpartum depression?

YES



Review:

3. Can you name a common symptom of postpartum depression?



Review:

3. Common symptoms of postpartum depression include:

- Feeling sad, hopeless, empty, or overwhelmed
- Crying more often than usual, or for no apparent reason
- Worrying or feeling overly **anxious**
- Feeling moody, **irritable, or restless**; experiencing anger or rage
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Review:

4. Will symptoms of postpartum depression or postpartum psychosis go away on their own?

Yes or No



Review:

4. Will symptoms of postpartum depression or postpartum psychosis go away on their own?

NO

Treating Postpartum Depression

Effective treatments may include:

- **Counseling/Talk Therapy:** This treatment involves talking one-on-one with a mental health professional.
 - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
 - Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)
- **Medication:** Antidepressant medications act on the brain chemicals that are involved in mood regulation. Many antidepressants take a few weeks to be most effective.

A woman's health care provider can help her choose the best treatment.



Untreated Postpartum Depression

If left untreated, postpartum depression can last for months or years and impact the baby.



How Can YOU Help?

- Encourage the mother to talk to a health professional;
- Offer support;
- Assist with daily tasks such as caring for the baby or the home.



How Can YOU Help?

Gently and lovingly share the information you have learned about postpartum depression.



Today's basics

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For More Information



www.nimh.nih.gov

For immediate help:
1-800-273-TALK (8255) toll-free
TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

Participants in clinical trials can play a more active role in their own health care, gain access to new research treatments before they are widely available, and help others by contributing to medical research. For more information, visit www.clinicaltrials.gov.

References:

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