

POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

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What is Postnatal Depression?



Postnatal Depression is a type of Depression women may experience in the first year after having a baby

It affects around **1 in 10 women** – it can also affect fathers

Symptoms usually start **within 6 weeks** of giving birth but can also start several months later – they can be gradual or sudden and can range from mild to severe

Postnatal depression is different from **'baby blues'** which is a brief period of feeling low, tearful or anxious in the first week after giving birth and usually last a few days.

Symptoms of low mood that **start later** or are **persistent**, could be a sign of postnatal depression

Some common myths about Postnatal Depression



Postnatal depression is less severe than other types of depression – *is it actually as serious as other types of depression*



Postnatal depression is entirely caused by hormonal changes – *it is caused by many different factors*



Postnatal depression gets better on its own – *it can persist for months and if left untreated it can become more serious*



Postnatal depression affects only women – *it also affects up to 1 in 10 fathers*

Common symptoms of Postnatal Depression

Persistent feeling of sadness and low mood

Lack of energy and feeling tired all the time

Feelings of guilt, worthlessness and lack of confidence

Lack of interest in things you previously enjoyed

Finding it difficult to look after yourself or your baby

Becoming withdrawn and feeling empty

Finding it hard to concentrate and make decisions

Frightening thoughts, such as about hurting your baby

Recognising Postnatal Depression in others

- *Postnatal Depression can develop gradually and be hard to recognise.*
- Some mothers may avoid talking to family or friends about how they feel because they **worry about being judged for not coping**
- *Family and friends can look out for common signs of postnatal depression such as:*
 1. Frequent crying for no obvious reason
 2. Difficulty bonding with baby; not wanting to play with them
 3. Withdrawing from others
 4. Speaking negatively about themselves
 5. Neglecting themselves
 6. Constantly worrying something is wrong with their baby despite reassurance

Risk Factors for Postnatal Depression

Prior history or family history of Depression or Anxiety

History of mental health problems during pregnancy

Pregnancy complications, traumatic birth, infant health problems

Limited social support

Recent stressful life events

Younger age, first time mothers

Some causes of Postnatal Depression

Hormonal changes

Rapid decline in oestrogen and progesterone levels after childbirth can trigger depression in susceptible individuals

Psychological stresses

Not being able to adequately address worries of caring for a newborn, or sleep deprivation, can lead to feelings of emotional overwhelm leading to depression

Social pressures

Expectations of motherhood can trigger feelings of inadequacy and low self esteem

What to do if you think you have Postnatal Depression

If you are worried about symptoms of postnatal depression it is important to get help early.

It is important to remember that depression is like any other illness and it is not your fault.

Speak to your GP, midwife or health visitor as soon as possible.

Your GP will be able to help recognise if your symptoms are due to postnatal depression and work with you to formulate the right treatment plan

Lots of support is available, including psychological therapy

If treated early, most women with post natal depression make a complete recovery.

If symptoms are severe, you may be referred to a specialist community perinatal mental health team

How can Postnatal Depression be managed?



- **Self help** – e.g. talking to people you trust about how you feel, taking time out to do things you enjoy, being kind to yourself with positive reaffirmation, getting adequate sleep, exercising regularly, eating healthily
- **Psychological Therapy** – self help courses or CBT can help managing negative thoughts and feelings of anxiety
- **Medication** – Antidepressants may be used if depression is more severe – your GP can also advise you on which medications are safe to take whilst breastfeeding

What you can do to help manage Postnatal depression



Talk to people you
trust about how you
feel



Try not to be
'supermum' – accept
help from others



Make time for yourself
– try to do things you
enjoy



Rest when you can



Try to exercise
regularly



Eat regular meals

Where to get further help and support

Association for Postnatal Illness (APNI) <https://apni.org>

Pre and Postnatal Depression Advice and Support (PANDAS)
<https://pandasfoundation.org.uk>

NCT <https://www.nct.org.uk>

NHS UK <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/post-natal-depression/treatment/>

References

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/post-natal-depression/treatment/>

<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/depression-antenatal-postnatal/background-information/risk-factors/>

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