



Postnatal Depression

You expect to find a new baby hard work (particularly your first). You expect your life to change. The responsibility of caring for a tiny child is worrying and it's understandable that broken nights and relentless days will result in exhaustion. 1 in 10 women, however, find themselves, not just coping with the demands of a new baby, but also struggling with their own feelings of depression.

For these women, making it through each day becomes an effort. They may begin to wonder if there's any hope for the next 16-18 years or even wish that they, or their baby, did not exist any more. Whilst other mums can have a good moan and then get on with bringing up their children, these women need a little more help.

Postnatal depression (PND) is reasonably common but it's certainly not an inevitable part of having a baby. Thankfully, it can be easily treated and often without antidepressants. Mild PND can be helped by increased support from family and friends

whilst more severe depression requires a visit to the doctor. Without treatment it can last for months or even years, robbing you of the joy of life and your new baby and putting a strain on your relationships.

Most cases of PND start within a month of giving birth but it can occur at any time in the first year. It can emerge gradually or suddenly, and varies in severity. Symptoms do differ too, but include depression, irritability, extreme tiredness, problems sleeping, loss of appetite or comfort eating, anxiety or obsessive behaviour, panic attacks, crying, loss of concentration and even suicidal thoughts.

It's not known what causes PND but you are more likely to suffer if you've had depression (especially PND) before, if you do not have a supportive partner, if you've a premature or sick baby, if you lost your own mother when you were a child or if you've had several recent life stresses – bereavement, unemployment, housing or money problems.

The Baby Blues or Postnatal Depression?

60-80% of new mothers will experience mood swings and feel a bit weepy, flat or anxious on the third or fourth day after having a baby. This is thought to be due to the rapid hormone changes associated with the end of pregnancy and the production of breast milk. It is not an illness, does not need treatment, other than the reassuring support of friends and family, and generally passes by about day 10. However, if it continues for more than a couple of weeks it may be developing into PND where treatment is needed.

www.babycentre.co.uk/baby/youafterthebirth/babyblues

Information from

www.mind.org.uk/help/diagnoses_and_conditions/post-natal_depression

www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation/mentalhealthproblems/postnatalmentalhealth/postnataldepression.aspx

This information is supplied in good faith but Care for the Family cannot accept responsibility for any advice or recommendations made by other organisations.

Your Family Charity

Care for the Family has been supporting and encouraging families in the UK since 1988. Its family-building events have been attended by over 320,000 people and many more have been helped through special initiatives - including stepfamilies, bereaved parents and those parenting alone. Founded by best-selling author and speaker Rob Parsons, the charity is committed to strengthening family life and helping those who face family difficulties.

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If you suspect that you might be suffering with PND then make it a priority to follow this up. It's difficult to motivate yourself when depressed and easy to be so busy with your baby that you do not find the time to look after yourself, but it's vitally important that you get some help. Talk to your toddler group leader and make an appointment with your health visitor or G.P.

If you know someone who is struggling and you would like to understand what they are going through or find out ways in which you may be able to help them, then read Care for the Family's SupportNet article on PND. Download the pdf from

www.careforthefamily.org.uk/pdf/supportnet/pnd



Male Postnatal Depression

Studies indicate that it is not just mums who struggle with PND. New fathers are twice more likely to suffer with depression than other men of the same age. Of course, men do not have the hormonal changes that women do, but the life-changes are just as big and the depression is no less serious. Many men find it hard to seek help and may turn to drink or drugs or bury themselves in their work as a 'coping mechanism'. A confidential telephone helpline exists to support these men – call Fathers Matter on (01268) 556328.

www.dad.info/health/your-health/post-natal-depression-dads

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Care for the Family – A Christian response to a world of need.
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