

Depression and Having a Baby

For many people it would seem strange to associate having a baby with any kind of mental health problem. So when experiencing mental health difficulties this is often accompanied by feelings of guilt and shame. In fact, it is thought that at least 10% of women who have recently delivered experience post-natal depression. Other mental health problems that can occur around the time of pregnancy and after childbirth include generalised anxiety, panic attacks, obsessions and compulsions, social anxiety, post-traumatic stress and psychosis.

Baby Blues and Post Natal Depression

The Baby blues is a term used to describe feelings of low mood, tiredness, tension and weepiness in the first few days after having a baby. It is thought to be due to the huge changes in hormones that occur following childbirth. This clears up after a few days. Post natal depression can be recognised when low mood doesn't seem to be going away and also include the following symptoms:

- Feeling worthless
- Feeling tearful
- Self-blame or guilt
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Emotional highs and lows
- Lack of energy
- Lack of interest in activities
- Increased or decreased appetite
- Reduced concentration and decision-making ability
- Sleep disturbance (difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep, unrelated to the baby)
- Worries about own health
- Confused thoughts
- Slow or fast speech
- Slowed movement or agitation
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Thoughts about death and suicide

Causes of Post Natal Depression

There is no known single one cause of postnatal depression. Some of the reasons are listed here:

- There are huge physical, emotional and social adjustments that need to be made after having a baby. Most of us are completely unprepared for becoming a parent, and often we don't have that much support. The demands of having a new baby can be completely overwhelming.

- Your personal situation can affect your ability to cope: social factors such as lack of support, unemployment, housing problems, and stressful life events
- Traumatic birth or difficult pregnancy experience.
- Previous depression or mental health problems, or depression during pregnancy.
- A difficult birth and health problems for you afterwards.
- Having a baby who was born prematurely or is not well.
- Difficulties with breast feeding.
- Expectations of being a mum may have been unrealistic. So when a new mum experiences problems coping, she can feel like a failure and become depressed.

Treatment of Post Natal Depression

The most effective treatment of post natal depression is therapies such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and anti-depressant medication. It should not be assumed that it will go away on its own. Talking Therapies can offer different types of therapies depending on what the problems are. For more information on how you might be able to access these, please talk with the Talking Therapies representative at your workshop. We hope that this workshop will offer you the support and information to help you to start helping yourself right away.

If you think you have post-natal depression, it is crucial to talk to the people close to you about how you are feeling and accept help and support from them. It is also important to talk with your GP, health visitor or midwife. Being a mum is a tough job. Although it can be incredibly rewarding, it can drain you physically, and emotionally and take its toll on relationships. Most importantly please remember, it is not your fault.

Position Available

- Full time: long days, seven days a week, some time off in the evenings.
- We are seeking a kind, considerate person for the challenging position of parent.
- Qualifications and experience are not necessary, although you will be fulfilling some or all of the tasks of the following trained people:
 - Chef, teacher, medical worker, social worker, psychologist, childcare worker, taxi driver, sales representative, manager, entertainer
 - This is an honorary position

Sources used to write this information sheet:

<http://www.babycentre.co.uk/baby/youafterthebirth/pnd/#6>

<http://apni.org/images/Depression.pdf>

*Family Wellbeing Workshop
Information Sheet 1*