

Postpartum Depression

A Secret Shame

When a woman has a baby, it is expected that she will be happy and joyful about the arrival of her newborn child and everything will be just easy and wonderful. Some women may find this to be the case, but for others (over 20 percent of all moms), the reality can be very different from this expectation. Often times, women will find themselves crying uncontrollably, uncomfortable in their own bodies, suffering from hormonal shifts and resenting the changes that the responsibility of caring for a child brings to their life.

Due to the fact that women feel the pressure to be the perfect mom, there is often a shame that comes with the negative feelings of baby blues or postpartum depression. This shame causes women to hide their feelings of sadness and depression. In order to decrease the incidence of baby blues and postpartum depression the families, friends, and doctors surrounding new mothers should be knowledgeable and observant of the possible symptoms of postpartum depression in new moms.

If left untreated, postpartum depression can cause negative effects on newborns and possibly turn into postpartum psychosis (remember Andrea Yates?). So, it is crucial that the community knows the symptoms of postpartum depression and where to turn for help.

Symptoms of Baby Blues

- Can occur 3-4 days after baby is born and last several days
- Mild depression
- Tearful for no apparent reason
- Emotional, easily upset
- Difficulty sleeping
- Anxious or tense
- Worrying about anything and everything
- Feeling of low energy despite rest

Symptoms of Postpartum Depression

- Can occur anytime within 6 months after baby is born and last for varying amounts of time depending on treatment
- Loss of appetite
- Less energy and motivation to complete daily tasks
- Sleeping more than usual
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Increase in crying or tearfulness
- Feeling that life is not worth living
- Feeling restless and irritable
- Constantly worrying
- Thoughts of hurting self or baby

Who is At Risk

Women with a history of depression are at higher risk of developing postpartum depression, so family and friends should be vigilant about supporting the mother and offering assistance if need be. Women who are encountering marital problems or other stressful events during or right after pregnancy are also at an increased risk of developing postpartum depression.

There have been studies that suggest that Omega supplements, exercise and breast feeding can help to keep the symptoms of postpartum depression at bay. But, the most important thing for a new mom to receive is support.

All women need support after the birth of a baby. They need people to talk to, people to occasionally take care of the baby, someone who can offer them time to rest and emotional support. Having a baby is a major life event that comes with many emotions and adjustments. Both moms and dads go through a lot of changes when a baby comes into their lives, so communication is essential to overcoming postpartum depression and developing an ability to enjoy family life.

If you think that you or someone you know is suffering postpartum depression, there are many resources available for you. The first point of contact should be the obstetrician that delivered the baby. Make an appointment with the doctor as soon as symptoms surface. The second step should be finding a therapist or community support group (often offered at local hospitals where babies are born). Often times the right therapist can help guide new moms to a place where the

cloud is lifted and they can finally enjoy life again.

Resources

[Postpartum Support International](#)

[Postpartum Depression Support Page](#)

[Women's Health.gov](#)

[Medline Plus Postpartum](#)