

Title: Postpartum depression: Not What You Expected When You Were Expecting.

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Abstract: Postpartum depression is similar to major depression with feelings of sadness, loss, and frustration. However, postpartum depression occurs within one month after the birth of a baby. It interferes with a woman's abilities to care for herself or her baby. This pamphlet describes risk factors, screening, and treatment for postpartum depression.

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What is Postpartum Depression?

Women with postpartum depression suffer from fatigue, difficulty sleeping, and sadness. Anxiety, irritability, tearfulness can occur too. A sense of decreased concentration or being overwhelmed is also common.

Symptoms usually start by the fifth day after birth, but can occur anytime within 1 month of delivery. It affects between five and nine percent of women.

Postpartum depression is *more serious than "baby blues."* Baby blues affect up to 80 percent of women. Baby blues resolve within two weeks and do not affect your ability to care for yourself or your baby.

Resources

- Depression After Delivery, Inc
(www.depressionafterdelivery.com/home.asp)
- Postpartum Education for Parents (www.sbpep.org)
Phone: 805-564-3888
- National Mental Health Association
(www.nmha.org) Phone: 800-969-NMHA
- Postpartum Support International
(www.postpartum.net)
Phone: 805-967-7636

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Postpartum Depression



Not What You
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Causes and Risk Factors

Dramatic hormonal changes that occur at delivery likely contribute to postpartum depression. However, the true cause is unknown.

Proven risk factors:

- History of depression
- Smoking



Possible risk factors (increase stress and/or decrease bonding):

- Marital conflict
- Not breast feeding
- Poor emotional support
- Poor financial support
- Unplanned pregnancy

Screening and Diagnosis

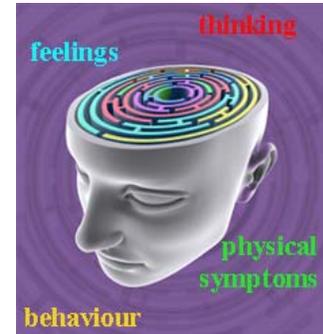
The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) is a questionnaire to detect postpartum depression. Common features include:

- Unable to find humor in things
- Blaming yourself
- Anxiety
- Inability to cope with stress
- Insomnia
- Sadness
- Unable to find joy in things
- Feeling scared
- Tearfulness/crying
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

Talk with your physician if you answer yes to any of the above. He/she is the only one that can diagnose postpartum depression. The above was adapted from EPDS.

Treatment and Helpful Hints

Psychosocial or “talk” therapy aids women in understanding their illness. It also helps to empower women with ways to cope.



Pharmacologic therapy helps regulate the balance of natural chemicals in the brain. A variety of medications can be used, so talk with your physician.

Helpful Hints:

- Spend time outside the home and alone with your partner
- Discuss your feelings
- Get plenty of rest
- Ask for help from friends and family