

Post-Partum Depression

Definition

Clinical Depression during pregnancy or up to a year following childbirth.

Occurrence & Statistics

Up to 10% of new mothers in cities; prevalence rates in rural areas are two to three times higher. Most women do not seek professional help and may not realize that they are depressed or they may feel ashamed about being unhappy when they are expected to be happy.

Symptoms

Those with PPD will experience most of the following: sadness and/or extreme irritability, lack of interest or pleasure in activities, increased or decreased appetite, increased or decreased need for sleep, extreme fatigue, cannot think clearly or make decisions, guilty feelings, especially about the baby, feels inadequate (especially as a parent), thoughts of suicide, or self-harm.

Misconceptions	Reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only affects women • Is caused by giving birth or only occurs after giving birth • That the depression is about being a parent • Is different than clinical depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPD impacts the entire family • Can impact bonding or attachment • Fathers/partners are also at risk for PPD • The child’s can be impacted by high levels of stress hormones circulating in utero

Who’s at Risk?

Depression can be understood as having physical, hormonal, social, psychological, & emotional contributing factors. Significant risks are for those who have a history of depression, lack of support, high stress levels, and have been a victim of interpersonal violence.

Treatments

- Interpersonal therapy (IPT) – for important relationships, support & understanding
- Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) – helps to identify & change beliefs & expectations
- Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) – helps process unacknowledged emotions
- Support groups – most helpful for first time mothers
- Medication – prescribed antidepressant or anti-anxiety medication

More Information

Mental Health Commission of Canada – www.mentalhealthcommission.ca

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre – www.keltymentalhealth.ca

Anxiety BC: Parents section – www.anxietybc.com/parents

National Institute of Mental Health – www.nimh.nih.gov

Sources

Canadian Psychological Association (2015) “Psychology Works” Fact Sheet: Post-Partum Depression

Centre for Addiction & Mental Health (2016) Postpartum Depression. Online overview.

Canadian Mental Health Association (2014) Postpartum Depression. Online overview.