



Mental Health Comprehensive Services

Providing Family Stability and Developing Life Coping Skills

Post-Partum Depression

The birth of a child can be a joyous and exciting time, but following childbirth, some women may experience postpartum disorders that can adversely affect a woman's mental health. Mothers commonly experience what is called "the baby blues," mood swings that are the result of high hormonal fluctuations that occur during and immediately after childbirth. They may also experience more serious mental health disorders such as postpartum depression, birth-related post-traumatic stress disorder or a severe but rare condition called postpartum psychosis.

In general, clinical depression occurs in approximately 15 to 25 percent of the population, and women are twice as likely as men to experience depression. Because women are most likely to experience depression during the primary reproductive years (25 to 45), they are especially vulnerable to developing depression during pregnancy and after childbirth. Women who develop these disorders do not need to feel ashamed or alone; treatment and support are available

What is postpartum depression (PPD)?

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a major form of depression and is less common than postpartum blues. PPD includes all the symptoms of depression but occurs only following childbirth. It can begin any time after delivery and can last up to a year. PPD is estimated to occur in approximately 10 to 20 percent of new mothers.

What are the symptoms of PPD?

Symptoms of PPD are the same as those for clinical depression and may include specific fears such as excessive preoccupation with the child's health or intrusive thoughts of harming the baby. Given the stressful circumstances of caring for a new baby, it is understandable that new mothers may be more tired, irritable and anxious. But when a new mother is experiencing drastic changes in motivation, appetite or mood she should seek the help of a mental health professional. For a clinical diagnosis of postpartum depression to be made, symptoms of PPD generally must be present for more than two weeks following childbirth to distinguish them from postpartum blues.

What treatments are available?

Taking antidepressant medication may help alleviate the symptoms of PPD and should be combined with ongoing counseling with a therapist trained in issues surrounding childbirth. Studies show that some antidepressant medications have no harmful effects on breastfeeding infants. Psychotherapy alone may also be used to treat PPD. New mothers should be encouraged to talk about their feelings or fears with others. Socializing through support groups and with friends can play a critical role in recovery. To speak with a Psychotherapist, call Mental Health Comprehensive Services for your confidential evaluation.

For more information about this article on Post Partum Depression visit <http://www.nmha.org/index.cfm?objectId=C7DF8CE1-1372-4D20-C892917FA2B62555>.