

Postnatal Depression: It's Not All Black & White

Postnatal Depression Awareness Week November 18 to 24

1. Signs and symptoms of postnatal depression - general

Symptoms can begin anywhere from 24 hours to several months after delivery

- Sleep disturbance unrelated to baby's sleep
- Changes in appetite
- Crying - feeling sad and crying without apparent reason OR feeling like you want to cry but can't
- Feelings of being overwhelmed, out of control, unable to cope
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Negative obsessive thoughts
- Fear of being alone OR withdrawing from family and friends
- Memory difficulties and loss of concentration
- Feeling guilty and inadequate
- Loss of confidence and self-esteem

2. Signs and symptoms of postnatal depression - men

Symptoms can begin anywhere from 24 hours to several months after delivery

- Tiredness, headaches and pain
- Irritability, anxiety and anger
- Loss of libido
- Changes in appetite
- Feelings of being overwhelmed, out of control and unable to cope
- Engaging in risk taking behaviour
- Feelings of isolation and disconnection from partner, friends or family
- Withdrawal from intimate relationships and from family, friends and community life
- Increased hours of work as a part of the withdrawal from family etc.
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol instead of seeking treatment for depression

3. Contributing factors to developing postnatal depression

- Post and antenatal depression are NOT biological (hormonal) conditions only. Psychological and social factors can also contribute and need to be addressed for full recovery. Factors can include:
 - Lack of social and emotional support
 - Stress and changes in relationships (particularly the couple relationship)
 - Social isolation and lack of transport
 - Lack of sleep
 - Difficult pregnancy or birth experience
 - Previous history of depression or genetic predisposition to depression
 - Unmet expectations of motherhood or fatherhood
 - Difficulty adjusting to the changes associated to the transition to parenthood
 - Worries about extra responsibilities, financial burdens and managing the stresses of work

- Norms and attitudes toward fatherhood and masculinity . men are less likely to talk about how they feel and maintaining that they are coping is very important
- Change in family dynamics so that some men may feel excluded from the parenting role or from the relationship with their partner.

4. Postnatal depression in Australia

- One in 7 new mums and 1 in 20 new dads are diagnosed with postnatal depression each year in Australia . that's 15 per cent of mums and 5 per cent of dads
- Around 14,000 new dads and 45,500 new mums are suffering with postnatal depression based on 2012 birth rates
- Lack of community awareness of contributes to parents remaining undiagnosed
- Early intervention and the right support and treatment are critical to effective recovery

5. Top tips for coping with a new baby

- If you're not feeling the way you expected to, don't put up with it for more than two weeks
- Keep talking to your partner and others about how you are feeling and what you are concerned about
- Have adequate time to yourself and with your partner, away from the baby to help adjust to the changes and losses that come with parenthood
- Take care of yourself - make sure you eat well, exercise and get adequate sleep
- Reduce expectations for yourself and your partner

6. About PANDA

- PANDA (the Post and Antenatal Depression Association) is the only specialist national organisation that raises community awareness of depression and anxiety during pregnancy and after birth (perinatal period); and provides support services to families to assist in their recovery
- PANDA is a not for profit organisation that has been supporting Australian families for over 28 years
- PANDA has helped tens of thousands of Australians get much-needed information, support and treatment to aid their recovery
- PANDA's services include:
 - National Perinatal Depression Helpline 1300 726 306 which provides counseling and support to those living with depression and anxiety during pregnancy and after the birth of a baby. Operates 9-7pm Monday to Friday (EST)
 - Home-Start, an in-home support program
 - Assistance setting up postnatal depression support groups
 - Information, education and training seminars for parent groups and health professionals
 - National resource and service referral database
 - PANDA actively makes follow-up calls and can become part of a care-plan for people experiencing perinatal depression. Most other helplines receive calls only.
- PANDA's helpline receives around 1800 new callers each year; in addition to follow-up support for existing callers
- Over 50,000 people visit PANDA's website every year to gain information on perinatal depression
- PANDA's website was rated as the No.1 website worldwide for mothers with a postnatal mental illness in a 2011 independent, international study by the University of Sussex
- PANDA was founded in the early 1980's by two women with postnatal depression and has grown to become a leader in the field of perinatal mental health.

Further information regarding postnatal depression:

Visit www.panda.org.au or call PANDA'S National Perinatal Depression Helpline: 1300 726 306