



Where can you get more information?

- Call Health Link - 408-5465

Notes

**POSTPARTUM
MOOD
DISORDERS**

**Information for Patients
and Families**

**Mental Health Programs
Grey Nuns Community
Hospital &
Misericordia Community
Hospital**

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What are Postpartum Mood Disorders?

These are mental disorders that occur usually within four weeks of delivery. Postpartum disorders are a subset of mood disorders and include the following:

Major Depression
Anxiety Disorders
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
Bipolar Illness
Brief Psychotic Disorder

You can obtain more detailed information on these in the individual pamphlets.

Postpartum disorders can range in severity from mild to severe. Baby blues is often what the milder version is called. The severity indicates what type of treatment will be helpful.

Symptoms that are common to postpartum disorders (though not specific to postpartum onset) include fluctuations in mood and preoccupation with infant well being. The range can vary from over concern to severe preoccupations or delusions (false beliefs). Various maternal behaviours have been observed including disinterest in the new baby, fearfulness of being alone with the baby or over intrusiveness that can interfere with the baby's rest.

Women with postpartum disorders often have anxiety that can range from mild generalized anxiety to panic attacks.

What causes Postpartum Mood Disorders?

The cause is not known. There may be hormonal changes, alterations in brain chemistry, or changes in the way brain chemicals work during the early postpartum period. Stress and/or isolation as well as sleep deprivation may also be a factor.

How are Postpartum Mood Disorders treated?

Milder versions, such as "baby blues" clear up on their own in about ten days. However, more moderate to severe symptoms require treatment.

Medication

Medication for depression and/or anxiety is often the treatment of choice. It is important to take medication as prescribed and go off the medication according to your doctor's instruction.

Talk Therapy

Many people find talk therapy helpful. This may be individual therapy or group therapy. Additionally, the therapy may be supportive, educational, explorative or a combination of these. Most new mothers find talk therapy

helpful in understanding their own experiences or to relate to other people who have the same problem.

Many new mothers find it helpful to discuss possible insecurities in their new role, the loss of old roles and to develop strong social supports. The transition to parenthood involves physical, emotional and social changes. All these can take time.

What can someone with a Postpartum Mood Disorder do?

Talk to your doctor. Ensure you discuss all your concerns with him/her. Proper medical assessment and treatment is essential.

Take care of yourself, pay attention to the basics: sleep, rest and exercise. Eat well and avoid caffeine, alcohol and other substances that are not helpful

Ask for help from those around you.

Find a solid network of support. This can include family, friends and people who are having similar experiences.

Prioritize the importance of the events in your life. Focus on what really matters.

Request your doctor or health care professional refer you for therapy.