



WHAT IS POSTNATAL DEPRESSION (PND)?

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Postnatal depression refers to an episode of clinical depression in the first year after childbirth. It affects up to 1 in 5 women who have had a baby. It is different from the 'baby blue' which usually occurs in the first two weeks after a baby is born.

It can occur after the birth of any baby, not only the first. Symptoms may actually begin before the birth of your baby, or continue after the 'baby blues' or start several months later.

HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL

The symptoms of postnatal depression include feelings of :

- Sadness
- Anxiety or panic
- Anger
- Numbness
- Guilt
- Inadequacy
- Helplessness
- Isolation
- Hopelessness
- Fear of the baby or harm occurring to the baby

IN ADDITION WOMEN WITH POSTNATAL DEPRESSION MAY EXPERIENCE

- Inability to sleep or excessive sleep
- Appetite change
- Lack of concentration
- Poor memory
- Chronic exhaustion or hyperactivity
- Lack of interest or pleasure in activities
- Low motivation
- Withdrawal from social contacts

Many women suffer symptoms in silence in the belief that they are the only one to feel this way or that nothing can be done to help them. Many feel ashamed if they are not coping with motherhood, expecting that this should be a happy time. Others are reassured by well-intentioned friends and family that what they are experiencing is simply a part of the 'normal' adjustment to motherhood.

While it is normal for mothers to feel exhausted and overwhelmed at times, if these feelings last more than two weeks or if they interfere with your day to day activities, do not hesitate to seek help. If untreated, symptoms may develop into a chronic depression.

WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE?

One of the first things you may be asked to do is complete a set of ten questions which is known as the Edinburgh Depression Scale – health professionals may use this to discuss with you the best option for you to get well. Other management options include anti-depressant medication, counselling, psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, couple counselling and alternative therapies.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

At Karitane we offer a range of services for women experiencing postnatal depression and their families. Women must be referred by a health professional.

Services include:

- Clinical assessment
- Individual counselling and therapy for mothers
- Individual counselling for partners
- Postnatal depression group
- Family counselling
- Parent-infant therapy
- Parentcraft consultancy

Where appropriate, treatment with anti-depressant medication can be arranged through referral back to your General Practitioner or to a Psychiatrist specialising in perinatal issues.

COMMON MOTHERHOOD MYTHS

- A women will intuitively know how to be a mother
- Motherhood is romantic
- The woman is responsible for a “happy” family
- Children are needed to make a “happy” marriage
- A mother’s worth is judged by the behaviour of her baby
- Mothering must be 24 hours a day
- Women at home have time to do things
- Mothers should know how to control children
- A mother “copes” no matter what
- A mother is selfish if she expresses her own needs

If you think you may have postnatal depression or at any other time you require help please consult your

- Child & Family health Nurse
- General Practitioner
- Karitane Careline on 1300 CARING (1300 227 464)
(TTY (02) 9794 1848 for hearing impaired)

Or visit:

<http://www.beyondblue.org.au>

<http://www.panda.org.au/>

Web: www.karitane.com.au

E-mail: Karitane.online@sswahs.nsw.gov.au

(This email address should be used for non-urgent queries only)

Karitane

Po Box 241

Villawood NSW 2163

Ph: (02) 9794 1800 Fax: (02) 9794 1858

(This email address should be used for non-urgent queries only – if you need an immediate answer to your question please use the telephone number above, contact your Child & Family Health Nurse or General Practitioner)

