

## Post natal depression

### Baby blues

Peaks on 2-5 days after birth. Occur in 50-75% of mothers. It is not a psychiatric illness and is not related to postnatal depression.

### Postnatal psychosis

Affects 1 in 500 new mothers. Almost always presents within 2 weeks of childbirth. Normally requires hospital admission and has an affective component. 50% will experience relapse at subsequent pregnancies. It is advisable not to have another pregnancy for 1-2 years. Commonly presents with severe insomnia, lability of mood, odd behaviour and delusions about baby. Always assess suicidal, infanticidal thoughts and degree of insight. Enquire about feelings towards the baby and possibility of neglect. Managed by admission to mother and baby unit. After a period of assessment mother and baby can be reunited. Treated with antidepressant +/- antipsychotics. Good response to ECT and Lithium.

### PND

Occurs in 1 in 10 new mothers. It usually occurs within the first month of delivery but can start up to six months after delivery.

Birth of a baby is a source of happiness but it also brings along with it many changes in life. The new mother not also has to go through the physical trauma of child birth, change in hormonal levels but also has to learn the skills of looking after a new born baby who is totally dependent on its parents for all its needs.

Sleep problems are common. Women often feel very emotional and find it difficult to cope. They tend to worry about the child's health and their inadequacies as a mother. This undermines the mother's self-confidence and esteem.

Birth of a child also changes the relationship between the new mother and her partner. Loss of interest in sex and irritability are common experiences. Motherhood may also involve change in role like giving up work, loss of freedom and at times loss of financial independence. Research has shown that mothers, who lack a confiding relationship, are unemployed and have 3 or more children under the age of 14 are more prone to depression. Loss of your own mother at a young age can also make you more vulnerable.

With the right treatment, a healthy life style and support, PND can be treated. Support from your partner and family can be very useful. Health visitors, midwives, community psychiatric nurses and organizations like meet a mum and association for post natal illness are also good sources of support and provide opportunities to ventilate your feelings, resentment and express fears. Trained professionals can help recognize negative thoughts and reduce feelings of failure. Also talking to and sharing your concerns with other new mothers can help lessen your worries. Ensure that you make time for yourself, at least half an hour a day to pursue your own interests.

Anti depressants are used to treat post-natal depression. They take 2-4 weeks to work and are effective in a vast majority of the patients. If you are breast-feeding you must inform your doctor.

After an episode of PND the possibility of recurrence (second episode) is 20-40%