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POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AS A MOOD DISORDER

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Postpartum depression affects women of all ages, races and economic backgrounds. Postpartum depression is presented as a mood disorder that begins after childbirth and usually lasts beyond six weeks. Two types of postpartum depression and symptoms are given.

Key words: Postpartum depression, woman, the birth of a child, types of postpartum depression

Postpartum depression affects women of all ages, races and economic backgrounds. For most families, the birth of a baby means a serious lack of sleep, mounds of dirty diapers and lots and lots of joy. But for at least one in eight new moms, the birth of a child can trigger deep depression during that first year. Postpartum depression is the most common complication of childbirth [4; 6; 8].

Postpartum depression is a mood disorder that begins after childbirth and usually lasts beyond six weeks. The onset of postpartum depression tends to be gradual and may persist for many months, or develop into a second bout following a subsequent pregnancy. Postpartum depression affects approximately 15% of all childbearing women. Mild to moderate cases are sometimes unrecognized by women themselves. Many women feel ashamed if they are not coping and so may conceal their difficulties.

Postpartum depression is often divided into two types: early onset and late onset. *An early onset* most often seems like the "blues," a mild brief experience during the first days or weeks after birth. During the first week after the birth up to 80% of mothers will experience the "baby blues." *Late onset* appears several weeks after the birth. This involves a slowly growing feeling of sadness, depression, lack of energy, chronic tiredness, inability to sleep, change in appetite, significant weight loss or gain, and difficulty caring for the baby [2].

Postpartum depression symptoms may include: loss of appetite, insomnia, intense irritability and anger, overwhelming fatigue, loss of interest in sex, lack of joy in life, feelings of shame, guilt or inadequacy, severe mood swings, difficulty bonding with your baby, withdrawal from family and friends, thoughts of harming yourself or your baby [3].

It is said in some articles that *postpartum psychosis* is most likely to affect women with bipolar disorder or a history of postpartum psychosis. Symptoms, which usually develop during the first 3 postpartum weeks (as soon as 1 to 2 days after childbirth), include: 1) feeling removed from your baby, other people, and your surroundings (depersonalization), 2) disturbed sleep, even when your baby is sleeping, 3) extremely confused and disorganized thinking, increasing your risk of harming yourself, your baby, or another person, 4) drastically changing moods and bizarre behavior,

5) extreme agitation or restlessness, 6) unusual hallucinations, often involving sight, smell, hearing, or touch, 7) delusional thinking that isn't based in reality [6; 7].

Postpartum psychosis is a severe but extremely rare (1 or 2 women in 1,000) disorder that can develop in the postpartum period. This illness is characterized by a loss of contact with reality for extended periods of time. Symptoms usually occur during the first few weeks after delivery and include hallucinations, delusions, rapid mood swings, and suicidal/infanticidal thoughts or actions. Postpartum psychosis is a very serious emergency and requires immediate help [5]. Postpartum psychosis is considered an emergency requiring immediate medical treatment.

Women are more at risk of severe mental illness after giving birth than at any other time in their lives. In the worst cases it can lead to postpartum psychosis, also known as puerperal psychosis, a mental illness which affects one in 500 new mothers and can result in suicide or them killing their baby.

BBC Newsnight has spoken to people affected by this devastating but poorly understood condition, which often goes undetected because doctors and midwives can fail to recognise the symptoms [8].

It is interesting to notice some myths and facts about Postpartum Depression:

1) *Myth*: It will go away if I just “tough it out” or ignore it. *Fact*: Acknowledging the way you feel and getting help for postpartum depression (PPD) will help speed your recovery; 2) *Myth*: Having postpartum depression means that I am a weak person. *Fact*: Strong and intelligent women can have PPD. You did nothing wrong, and you did not cause it; 3) *Myth*: If I take medication for postpartum depression, I cannot breastfeed. *Fact*: There are medications used to treat PPD that are compatible with breastfeeding. Check with your health care provider and/or lactation consultant; 4) *Myth*: Postpartum depression can happen to me only in the first few months after birth. *Fact*: It can happen during pregnancy or any time during your baby’s first year; 5) *Myth*: Because I did not have postpartum depression with my first baby, I probably will never have it. *Fact*: Postpartum depression can happen with the birth of any baby [1].

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