

Depression and Breastfeeding

Are you feeling “blue” or depressed?

As a new breastfeeding mother, it is normal to experience the “baby blues” or short periods of mild anxiety. For some women, the blues don’t seem to go away. When feelings of sadness, hopelessness, fear and anxiety take over their life and don’t go away on their own within a couple of weeks, it may be perinatal depression. Perinatal depression changes the way a woman thinks, feels and behaves. It can make her act so different that the people who know and love her barely recognize the person she has become. Some women try to hide their feelings and pretend everything is okay.

Did you know?

Perinatal depression affects 1 in 7 women during pregnancy or up to one year after childbirth. Research studies show that breastfeeding women experience less perinatal depression. With proper care and treatment, women with perinatal depression can soon start feeling like themselves again. Women can continue to breastfeed while being treated for perinatal depression.

Why Do New Mothers Not Ask For Help?

Women may be afraid to tell someone because they have fears like these:

- “People will think I am a bad mother.”
- “My child(ren) will be taken away.”
- “I will lose my partner.”
- “I will be arrested or hospitalized.”

Some women do not tell others how they feel because they think how they feel is normal when they are pregnant or have a newborn. Or, they think the feelings will go away. Or they think sharing these feelings with others would bring shame or embarrassment. Or they feel they can deal with it, they can handle it, if given a little more time. The truth is....perinatal depression does not “just go away”. If it isn’t treated, it can get worse over time, making women less able to care for themselves, their baby and family.

Symptoms of Perinatal Depression

Women with perinatal depression may:

- Feel sad or hopeless most of the time
- Not laugh at things like she used to
- Not enjoy doing things she used to enjoy doing
- Be more anxious and worried than usual
- Feel scared and panicky and not know why
- Have difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Be quick to blame herself when things go wrong
- Not have the energy to do what she should be doing
- Not wanting to take care of herself, i.e. showering, fix hair, get dressed
- Not want to take care of the house or children
- Cry a lot because the smallest things upset her
- Have thoughts about hurting herself, her baby or other children

If more than one of these symptoms last longer than two weeks, call and get help right away!

To find a person who is trained to help, contact your OB/GYN health care provider, Family practice health care provider or call the 24 hour crisis hotline.

The 24 hour crisis hotline, call: 1-800-773-6667 (Kristin Brooks Hope Center) or send a text message- Text “PA” to 741-741 for the PA Crisis Line.