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Postnatal Feelings

What is the baby blues?

The baby blues is a period of mood swings which you can experience after your baby is born. Between 60 to 80% of women experience the baby blues, which can last from only a few days to a few weeks. You may experience a wide range of emotions following the birth of your baby,

but it is certainly not uncommon for women to experience the 'baby blues' in the first few days after childbirth.

What causes the baby blues?

The baby blues may be caused by sudden changes in your hormone levels around the time of baby's birth. However, there can be other causes. After all the anticipation and apprehension you may have felt before the birth of your baby, combined with the physical exertion of the birth itself, you might feel unprepared for the sheer exhaustion which overcomes you afterwards. You will need lots of rest and self-care to recover both physically and emotionally.

How will I feel if I get the baby blues?

You could feel emotional and burst into tears for no particular reason. Some mothers feel very tense and anxious. They may worry about minor problems and often have trouble sleeping. Others may feel generally unwell, and exhausted, irritable and sensitive.

What is the difference between the baby blues and postnatal depression?

The baby blues occurs during the first week after a baby's birth and lasts for a few days. Your mood usually improves after a few days with no treatment except support and understanding. With support and self-care your mood is likely to improve.

Postnatal depression is a condition that can last from several weeks to several months and affects up to 20% of mothers. Onset can be any time in the first year after birth. Isolation from social networks, birth experience and significant life events such as a death in the family or moving house, are strongly linked to postnatal depression.

Symptoms of postnatal depression

- Depressed mood
- Overwhelming feelings of anxiety
- Loss of control when usually competent
- Inability to cope and make decisions (i.e. with household tasks)
- Inability to think clearly or find the right words
- Tearfulness for no apparent reason
- Exhaustion and over-concern about lack of sleep
- Poor appetite or overeating
- Loss of sexual interest
- Fear of being alone
- Poor self image
- Low self-worth
- Fear of social contact
- Irritability and apathy
- Obsessional thoughts or activities

- Exaggerated fears about the safety of self, baby or partner
- Dark thoughts or
- Thoughts of self harm.

All mothers experience some of these symptoms at times of emotional and physical exhaustion. However, if the symptoms remain persistent or last more than two weeks, do not hesitate to seek help.

What should I do if I think I have postnatal depression?

Try discussing your feelings with your Child and Family Health Nurse or your doctor. They may in turn refer you and your baby to a Tresillian Centre where you will receive support, understanding and advice.

Talk to your husband or partner or trusted family members. It's important that you ask for help and don't continue to endure feeling distressed, in the hope they will go away. Remember that postnatal depression can be treated successfully with the right help.

Treatment depends on the severity of the symptoms and may include:

- Counselling (individual or group)

- A group support program where you have the opportunity to meet with others who are experiencing feelings similar to yours
- Help with your baby's needs
- Appropriate medication

Will I get better?

Yes, you will get better. It may take a while but with professional help you will feel better about the changes in your life.

Can I help myself?

Yes, by seeking help when you recognise that you may have postnatal depression. It is important that you take the time out for yourself. Plan regular small amounts of time away from your baby to recharge. Make sure you don't isolate yourself at home. Pay special attention to your diet, try and exercise regularly and get as much rest as your baby allows. It does help to talk to someone about how you are feeling so do confide in a friend or family member.

Can postnatal depression recur?

Yes, it is possible to suffer postnatal depression after the birth of subsequent children but not always. Often the depression is less severe and can be minimised with the support of your health professional and family prior to the birth.

Tresillian Day and Residential Services support families experiencing a range of early parenting challenges including:

- Sleep and settling difficulties
- Adjustment to parenthood
 - Breastfeeding
 - Infant nutrition
 - Toddler behaviour
 - Multiple babies
- Emotional and psychological health & wellbeing
 - Postnatal depression and anxiety

For Parenting Support or to Self Refer to a Tresillian Service call:

Tresillian Parent's Help Line
1300 272 736

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