

Postpartum Depression

What is postpartum depression?

Postpartum depression is a major depressive episode that occurs after giving birth. Its symptoms usually intensify during the first four weeks postpartum.

Some facts...

- ⇒ According to the National Mental Health Association (2000) depression affects around 19 million adults in the USA.
- ⇒ Depression occurs more frequently in women between 25 and 44 years of age.
- ⇒ Postpartum depression is associated with delays in language development, sleep problems, and emotional and behavioral problems in infants. ("Depression During and After Pregnancy", 2005, p.4)
- ⇒ Postpartum depression is a problem because it affects not only the mother, but also the baby and the family around her.

Statement of the issue...

Healthy People 2010 ⇒ At the time of publication, there was no operational definition for postpartum depression. This issue was recognized under the objective of "reducing maternal illness and complications due to pregnancy" (2000).

- ⇒ The data on the issue of postpartum depression had to be suppressed due to being statistically unreliable or not being collected in certain areas.

Epidemiologic picture of the issue...

- ⇒ It is estimated that 13% of women experience postpartum depression in the USA.

- ⇒ Women with less than 12 years of education or low socioeconomic status reported severe depression after giving birth on a self-reported survey on postpartum depression.
- ⇒ Women who were abused during pregnancy or suffered traumatic stress also tend to report feeling "severely depressed".
- ⇒ In terms of age, women between 20 and 24 years of age seem to have a higher report of severe depression.
- ⇒ In terms of race and ethnicity there were no significant differences on the self-reported survey on postpartum depression.

What is being done?

"The Postpartum Depression Project (Improving Women's Health Through Screening and Treatment for Depression During and Around the Time of Pregnancy)" presented by the Family Mental Health Foundation looks to increase awareness of postpartum depression. Part of this project is to improve screenings for depression in primary care settings and provide with case management for those diagnose with postpartum depression.

"The Washington State Postpartum Depression Awareness Campaign" led by the Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect looks to increase understanding of disorders that affect women. One of its goals is to make information more accessible to the public.

"The Postpartum Depression Prevention Program" is a non-profit organization created by the University of Miami Behavioral Health Program to address the mental and behavioral issues of the University of Miami employees and dependents. Their main goal is to identify at-risk women and provide them with the necessary education. Their plan is to distribute information to women who enroll in any of the HMO's prenatal care services.

Then...

Based on these three programs, the most important tool to address postpartum depression seems to be the increase of awareness and education about this problem. These tools will facilitate the differentiation between postpartum depression and the so-calledn "blues".

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Internet resources...

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