

Tip Sheet: Perinatal Mental Health in Home Visiting

Prenatal Depression: 10-20% of mothers (New York State)

Crying, weepiness, sleep problems, fatigue, appetite disturbance, Anhedonia (loss of enjoyment of activities), anxiety, poor fetal attachment, irritability

Baby Blues: As high as 80% of new mothers. Begins during the first few weeks of delivery (usually in the first week, peaking at 3-5 days). Symptoms usually resolve by two weeks after delivery. Crying, weepiness, sadness, irritability, exaggerated sense of empathy, anxiety, mood lability ("ups" and "downs"), feeling overwhelmed, insomnia; trouble falling or staying asleep; fatigue/exhaustion, frustration

Postpartum Depression: 10-20% of new mothers. Usually within the first two to three months post-partum, though onset can be immediate after delivery.

- Depression that occurs after childbirth.
- Those who develop postpartum depression are at greater risk of developing major depression later on in life.
- Symptoms might include insomnia, loss of appetite, intense irritability, and difficulty bonding with the baby.
- Untreated, the condition may last months or longer. Treatment can include counseling, antidepressants, or hormone therapy.
- Persistent sadness
- Frequent crying, even about little things
- Poor concentration or indecisiveness
- Difficulty remembering things
- Feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy or guilt
- Irritability, crankiness
- Loss of interest in caring for oneself
- Not feeling up to doing everyday tasks
- Fatigue, loss of energy
- Insomnia or hyper insomnia (excessive daytime sleepiness)
- Significant decrease or increase in appetite
- Anxiety manifested as bizarre thoughts and fears, such as obsessive thoughts of harm to the baby
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Somatic symptoms (headaches, chest pains, heart palpitations, numbness and hyperventilation)
- Poor bonding with the baby (no attachment), lack of interest in the baby, family or activities
- Loss of pleasure or interest in doing things one used to enjoy
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide

Other Caregiver Considerations: Supporting the Non-Birth Parent

One in 10 dads gets postpartum depression and up to 18% develops a clinically significant anxiety disorder at some point during the pregnancy or the first year (Postpartum International, 2021)

Signs and Symptoms of Postpartum Depression and Anxiety in Men:

- Increased anger and conflict with others
- Increased use of alcohol or prescription/street drugs
- Frustration or irritability
- Violent behavior
- Significant weight gain or loss
- Isolation from family and friends
- Being easily stressed
- Impulsiveness or risk taking (this kind of behavior can include reckless driving or extramarital affairs)
- Feeling discouraged; cynicism
- Increase in complaints about physical problems, like headaches, digestion problems or pain
- Problems with concentration or motivation
- Loss of interest in work, hobbies and/or sex
- Working constantly
- Concerns about productivity and functioning at work or school
- Fatigue
- Feeling sad or crying for no reason
- Conflict between how you feel you should be as a man and how you are
- Thoughts of suicide or death

(Pacific Postpartum Support Society, 2014)

Tips for Supporting a Partner with Perinatal Depression:

- Be knowledgeable and aware of the symptoms and red flags to look for, as the one suffering may not be able to see their own needs
- Help them get more sleep
- Reassure their feelings and let them know they are not alone; there is help
- Listen without judgement, encourage discussing feelings
- Help with housework and ensure their basic needs are being met (provide them with water, encourage showering, prepare meals, promote self-care)
- Offer affection, bonding and physical closeness
- Ask them “how can I help right now?” “what can I do for you?”

(Postpartum International, 2021)

References

Help for partners and Families. Postpartum Support International (PSI). (2021, September 24). Retrieved March 18, 2022, from <https://www.postpartum.net/get-help/family/>

Signs of postpartum depression and anxiety in men. Pacific Post Partum Support Society. (2014, August 12). Retrieved March 18, 2022, from <https://postpartum.org/services/dads/signs-of-ppd-anxiety-in-men/>