

Post-Partum Depression



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Many women experience mood changes after childbirth. Some, however, experience serious difficulties with day to day life along with extreme feelings of guilt, anxiety, and fear after giving birth. This is known as **Post-Partum depression**.

Occasionally, women can be diagnosed with Post-partum psychosis. Those with Post-partum psychosis may see or hear things that do not exist, experience very quick mood swings or have thoughts of harming themselves or their infant. Women who have bipolar disorder or schizoaffective disorder are at increased risk for post-partum psychosis.

What are the symptoms?

Like other forms of depression, those with Post-partum depression experience and show signs differently. Post-partum depression affects the whole family and it is important to note that partners of someone who experiences Post-partum depression may also become depressed themselves. Some signs of Post-partum depression are:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Thoughts of harming themselves or their infant
- Crying for long periods of time
- Loss of pleasure in life or activities that they would normally enjoy

What are the causes?

Any woman, even those who have not experienced depression before, can experience the illness; it says nothing about ability to be a good parent. With treatment (talk therapy and/or medication), they can feel better.

- **Experiences with depression.** Women who experience Post-partum depression often have had previous episodes of depression that may not have been diagnosed and treated.
- **Previous experience(s) with Post-partum depression.** Women who experience Post-partum depression have a 50% chance of experiencing it again with additional pregnancies.
- **Hormones.** Thyroid hormones may decrease after childbirth and may cause symptoms like depression. Extreme changes in hormones after birth may also contribute to Post-partum depression.
- **Life Circumstances.** Such as conflicts with partners, money problems, stress or substance use, lack of community or social support may also all play roles.
- **Family History.** Depression can run in families.

Treatment

Research shows that certain antidepressants, including some SSRIs, can be used during breastfeeding. Women who suffer from post-partum depression should talk with a medical professional to find a course of treatment that works best for them.

