



Learn about the causes and symptoms of perinatal depression

There has been a lot of research conducted to understand antenatal and postnatal depression (sometimes called ‘perinatal depression’) and its causes. Although biological changes such as fluctuations in hormones following birth might contribute to postnatal depression, this is only part of the story.

What is depression?

Depression is not simply a biological illness, or a heavy cloud that “descends upon us” – even though depression is often experienced like this. Instead, a combination of psychological, social, cultural and biological factors best explain the onset of perinatal depression. Some women are more vulnerable than others, for instance, due to a family history of depression. Triggering events such as loss of income and insufficient support can also contribute. The transition to parenthood is also challenging, especially if this your first baby.

Symptoms

While almost 80% of new mothers feel “blue” for a few days after birth, about 20% experience postnatal depression in the months after delivery. Postnatal depression is more severe and long lasting than the baby blues – it causes greater interference in being able to enjoy your day and the symptoms are often described as ‘like descending into a black hole’.

Symptoms can range in severity from mild to severe and can include feeling hopeless, feeling tearful, irritable, and/or having emotional highs and lows. When a number of symptoms (such as those in the box below) cluster together you may be diagnosed with a depressive disorder that warrants treatment such as the online treatment available on MumSpace. You may also experience anxiety, such as worrying about your health and your baby’s health or just being tense in general and having confused thoughts. Our online treatment also offers techniques for managing anxiety.

Women with depression do not all experience the same symptoms. The severity, frequency and duration of symptoms will vary depending on the individual and her particular history.



You may be diagnosed with postpartum depression if you experience 5 or more of these symptoms in the last 2 weeks

- Low mood
- Less interest in or pleasure from activities
- Significant changes in appetite or weight (unrelated to your pregnancy or breastfeeding)
- Problems sleeping or falling asleep (even when your baby is sleeping) or sleeping too much
- Lack of energy or tiredness
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Repeated thoughts about death and suicide
- Changes in the way you move (restless or slowed down)

A smaller number of pregnant women and new mums (about 1 in every 1000) will experience episodes of more severe mental health conditions including psychosis, bipolar or schizophrenic disorders. Women who have a history or a family history of these kinds of illness may be more vulnerable to relapse in the perinatal period. If you are concerned, it is therefore important to speak to your GP or other medical professional.

More information

MumMoodBooster

Is a simple-to-use evidence-based online Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) treatment for postnatal depression and anxiety. Mum2BMoodBooster is the pregnancy version. Sessions are interactive, tailored to your problems and have been found to be highly effective by many women.

MindMum

MindMum is a mobile phone app to help you cope at times of stress and provides useful tips and ideas to support your emotional wellbeing during pregnancy and after having baby. This can be freely downloaded from MumSpace.

What Were We Thinking!

What Were We Thinking is an Australian website and mobile application that supports new mums and dads in learning? practical skills for settling babies and adjusting to changes in their relationship with each other.

Baby Steps

Baby Steps provides information to parents on caring for baby and themselves to enhance the wellbeing of new mums and dads.

For more information and support, head on over to MumSpace where we are with you, every step of the way.

www.mumspace.com.au