



Perinatal Depression

What is Perinatal Depression?

Perinatal depression is depression that occurs during or after having a baby. These depressive feelings range from mild to severe and last more than 2 weeks. Perinatal depression can happen to any person. It is important to remember that perinatal depression is never your fault. It is not brought on by anything a person has or has not done.

Research shows that 1 in 8 women experience symptoms of postpartum depression.

Symptoms

- Restlessness, irritability, or excessive crying
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Excessive anxiety or worry
- Thoughts or worries that are difficult to control
- Difficulty eating or sleeping
- Feeling overwhelmed, inadequate, guilty, or worthless
- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Not feeling like yourself or someone voicing concern with how you are doing

How is Perinatal Depression Treated?

Perinatal depression can be treated successfully. Treatment options can vary depending on the type and severity of symptoms.

The most common treatments are:

- Psychotherapy/counseling
- Antidepressant/anti-anxiety medication
- Self-care
- A combination of these treatments

Self-Care Strategies While Seeking Treatment

- Rest as much as you can. Sleep while the baby naps. Try not to let your visitors keep you from getting the sleep you need. Turn off the phone and put a sign on the door when you are napping.
- Try to do some gentle exercises, eat healthy foods, and drink plenty of fluids to care for your body
- Try to spend time outdoors. Take the baby out for a walk.
- Ask for help. Have family and friends help you with household chores and errands.
- Talk with friends and family, especially other new parents, about your experiences as a parent.
- Go to a support group for new parents.

How Others Can Help

All mothers need help and support after the birth of a baby. Ask your partner, family, and friends to help in the following ways:

- Listen when you need to talk
- Help in caring for the baby
- Help with cooking, shopping, cleaning, other household chores, and errands
- Give you time alone each day to sleep, bathe, exercise, read, or meditate

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. The Pre to 3 Program does not endorse any medications or products mentioned.

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, May 14). Depression Among Women. Retrieved February 18, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/depression/index.htm#Postpartum>
Pilkington, K., & Wieland, L. S. (2020). Self-care for anxiety and depression: a comparison of evidence from Cochrane reviews and practice to inform decision-making and priority-setting. *BMC complementary medicine and therapies*, 20(1), 247. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12906-020-03038-8>

