

Perinatal Mood Disorders and their impact upon the health of mother and baby

A review of the literature

MOTHER

- Prevalence and symptoms of perinatal mood disorders
 - Antepartum depression/anxiety: 15-20% of pregnant women will experience moderate to severe symptoms of depression and/or anxiety.¹
 - Postpartum depression: Approximately 15% of women experience major or minor depression following childbirth.² Among lower-income women, rates of postpartum depression can be as high as 30%.³ Symptoms differ from woman to woman, but can include: feelings of anger, fear, and/or guilt, lack of interest in the baby, appetite and sleep disturbance, difficulty concentrating and/or making decisions, and possible thoughts of harming the baby or oneself.⁴
 - Postpartum Panic Disorder: This form of anxiety occurs in up to 11% of new mothers.⁵ Symptoms include feeling very nervous, recurring panic attacks, and experiencing excessive worries and/or fears.⁴
 - Postpartum Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: It is estimated that as many as 3-5% of new mothers will experience symptoms obsessive-compulsive disorder following pregnancy.⁶ Although this is one of the most misunderstood and misdiagnosed perinatal disorders, symptoms have been identified as obsessions related to the baby, compulsions, as well as a sense of horror over the obsession and/or compulsions.⁴
 - Postpartum Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: An estimated 1-6% of women experience PTSD following childbirth.⁷ Symptoms of this disorder typically include traumatic childbirth experience, reoccurring dreams and thoughts about the traumatic childbirth

¹ Bennett, H.A., Einarson, A., Taddio, A., Koren, G., & Einarson, T.R. (2004). Prevalence of depression during pregnancy: a systematic review. *Obstetric Gynecology*, 103(4), 698-709.

² Marcus, S. (2009). Depression during pregnancy: rates, risks, and consequences. *Canadian Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, 150, 662-673.

³ Boyd, R.C., Zayas, L.H., & McKee, M.D. (2006). Mother-infant interaction, life events, and prenatal and postpartum depressive symptoms among urban minority women in primary care. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 10(2). 139-148.

⁴ Postpartum Support International (2009). *Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders: Fact sheet*. Retrieved from <http://www.postpartum.net/Get-the-Facts.aspx>

⁵ Wisner, K.L., Peindl, K.S., & Hanusa, B.H. (1996). Effects of childbearing on the natural history of panic disorder with comorbid mood disorder. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 41, 173-180.

⁶ Brandes, M., Soares, C.N., & Cohen, L.S. (2004). Postpartum onset obsessive compulsive disorders: diagnosis and management. *Archives in Women's Mental Health*, 7, 99-110.

⁷ Beck, C. (2004). Post-Traumatic stress disorder due to childbirth: The aftermath. *Nursing Research*, 53(4), 216-224.

experience, avoidance of stimuli associated with the event, and persistent increased arousal such as irritability, difficulty sleeping, hypervigilance, etc.⁴

- Postpartum Psychosis: This disorder occurs in approximately 1 to 2 of every 1,000 deliveries.⁸ Symptoms include delusions and/or hallucinations, extreme irritability, hyperactivity, decreased need for sleep, and poor decision-making.⁴

BABY

- Effects upon the fetus
 - Fetuses of depressed mothers are smaller and have slower fetal growth rates.⁹
- Effects on birth measures
 - Mothers suffering from antepartum depression are more likely to:
 - Give birth pre-term¹⁰
 - Give birth to a low-birth weight baby¹⁰
- Effects upon infants and children
 - Newborns of depressed mothers are less responsive to stimuli.⁹
 - When not properly diagnosed and treated, perinatal mood disorders, including postpartum depression, can disrupt mother-infant bonding.¹¹
 - Depressed mothers are more likely to:
 - Miss routine pediatric and well-child visits
 - Use the emergency room as a routine source of care for their children
 - Smoke cigarettes¹²
 - Use corporal punishment¹³
 - When depression overwhelms a mother, she is less likely to:
 - Breastfeed¹⁴
 - Follow preventive health advice for managing her children's chronic health conditions or disabilities¹⁵

⁸ Sit, D., Rothschild, A.J., & Wisner, K.L. (2006). A review of postpartum psychosis. *Journal of Women's Health, 15*(4), 352-368.

⁹ Field, T. (2010). Prenatal depression effects on early development: A review. *Infant Behavior and Development*, [Epub ahead of print].

¹⁰ Grote, N.K., Bridge, J.A., Gavin, A.R., Melville, J.L., Iyengar, S., & Katon, W.J. (2010). A meta-analysis of depression during pregnancy and the risk of preterm birth, low birth weight, and intrauterine growth restriction. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 67*(10), 1012-1024.

¹¹ Meohler, E., Brunner, R., Wiebel, A., Reck, C. & Resch, R. (2006). Maternal depressive symptoms in the postnatal period are associated with long-term impairment of mother-infant bonding. *Archives of Women's Mental Health, 9*(5), 273-278.

¹² Flynn, H.A., Davis, M., Marcus, S.M., Cunningham, R., & Blow, F.C. (2004). Rates of maternal depression in pediatric emergency department and relationship to child service utilization. *General Hospital Psychiatry, 26*(4), 316-322.

¹³ Chung, E.K., McCollum, K.F., Elo, I.T., Lee, H.J., & Culhane, J.F. (2004). Maternal depressive symptoms and infant health practices among low-income women. *Pediatrics, 113*, 523-529.

¹⁴ Paulson, J.F., Dauber, S., & Leiferman, J.A. (2006). Individual and combined effects of postpartum depression in mothers and fathers on parenting behavior. *Pediatrics, 118*(2), 659-668.

- Give her child daily vitamins¹⁶
- Spend time smiling at and touching her infant⁹
- Children whose mothers experienced antepartum depression
 - Have greater overall adiposity (i.e., overweight and obesity)¹⁷
 - Exhibit developmental delays and behavioral and emotional problems⁹
 - Suffer sleep disturbances⁹

¹⁵ Kavanaugh, M, Halterman, J.S., Montes, G., Epstein, M., Hightower, A.D., & Weitzman, M. (2006). Maternal depressive symptoms are adversely associated with prevention practices and parenting behaviors for preschool children. *Ambulatory Pediatrics*, 6(1), 32-37.

¹⁶ Leiferman, J. (2002). The effect of maternal depressive symptomatology on maternal behaviors associated with child health. *Health Education & Behavior*, 29(5), 596-607.

¹⁷ Ertel, K.A., Koenen, K.C., Rich-Edwards, J.W., & Gillman, M.W. (2010). Antenatal and postpartum depressive symptoms are differentially associated with early childhood weight and adiposity. *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology*, 24, 179-189.