

Facts about Postpartum Mood Disorders

What is a Postpartum Mood Disorder?

A postpartum mood disorder (PPMD) is a mental health disorder affecting women within the first year after giving birth. All women of childbearing age should be aware that a PPMD can occur after delivery regardless of whether you are a first time mother or have had previous pregnancies.

- Four out five new moms experience the “baby blues” that can last a few days or weeks. These symptoms may include feeling:
 - sad and tearful
 - exhausted but unable to sleep
 - overwhelmed
 - hopeless or frustrated
 - restless, irritable or angry

- If these symptoms last for more than two weeks, it is likely that the new mom is suffering from a postpartum mood disorder and should seek help immediately. One in five new moms suffer from PPMD. Other symptoms include:
 - feeling anxious
 - feeling guilty or ashamed
 - feeling extremely high and full of energy
 - feeling disengaged from the baby
 - being afraid to be alone with the baby
 - having repeated scary thoughts about the baby
 - thinking of harming herself or the baby

- New moms suffering from postpartum mood disorders can take steps to overcome PPMD:
 - contact their family physician, midwife, nurse, OB/GYN or psychiatrist
 - rest when the baby sleeps
 - ask for and accept help from family and friends
 - eat healthfully and exercise regularly
 - seek counselling
 - consider medication if prescribed by a doctor

- There are many things a partner, family or friends can do to help a new mom who is suffering from postpartum mood disorders including:
 - encourage her to talk about her feelings
 - help her find a compassionate health care provider and offer to go with her to appointments
 - develop a relationship with the baby to give mom a much-needed break
 - provide meals, do chores and care for older children
 - avoid misunderstandings by communicating

There are resources available to all women who may be experiencing postpartum mood disorders. Contact the local public health department, Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or TYY at 1-866-797-0007 or Mental Health Services Information Ontario at 1-866-531-2600. Visit www.lifewithnewbaby.ca for more information.

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For more information, please contact:

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