

Client Handout: Postpartum Depression



Pineapple Babies Birth Services

Postpartum depression affects 10% to 15% of women after birth. If you are a teen or adolescent mother, that percentage is higher. If you have history of any mood disorder or anxiety disorder, your risk is also higher. Women who have experienced postpartum depression with a past birth should be prepared to manage postpartum depression with future births.

Knowing the signs of postpartum depression and who to turn to for help is a great way to be prepared in case you should find yourself needing to manage postpartum depression in yourself.



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Baby Blues

Baby blues often arrive on day three, about the same time your milk comes in. Baby blues are characterized by exhaustion, irritability with normal activities, unexplained crying, and a general desire to just stay in bed with your baby. Baby blues last from a few hours to a few days. During this time it is important to nurse your baby often, nap when your baby naps, minimize exposure to household business, stay hydrated, and have someone bring you food often. You may have some concerns about breastfeeding, how your baby latches, how long your baby is sleeping, how many wet/messy diapers your baby is having, or a rash that has developed. Take some time to connect with your birth team for chat. Laugh with your midwife and cry with your midwife. Your midwife may be able to reassure you that all is well with you and your baby. By day five you may be experiencing gratefulness. Gratefulness for your baby, for your birth experience, for your partner's support, for your other children, for the life you have. It can be overwhelming. RELAX! Enjoy a day of gratefulness. Snuggle with your baby and get as much rest as you can. Don't use this time as a reason to get back to household duties and management or work. Continue resting for several more days.

Postpartum Depression

What are some the risk factors for postpartum depression? Risk factors for postpartum depression include but are not limited to your age; how many times you have been pregnant; how many babies you have had; how your family and friends responded to the news of your pregnancy; if you had any complications during your pregnancy; how you feel about your birth experience; if you experienced a miscarriage, chose to place your baby for adoption, or had an abortion (this pregnancy or a past pregnancy); if you struggled with infertility, if you are single, if you have a baby with special needs or other health concerns, if you are struggling with breastfeeding, or in you have an underactive thyroid. The list of risk factors is long but your midwife can help you plan for a healthy postpartum period. If you have a history of mental health concerns you can get started with counseling and possibly medications before you give birth.

Postpartum depression can begin anytime after your baby is born and can last for many months to years. It is important that it is diagnosed and treated as soon as possible. You should be aware of the signs of postpartum depression, as it can kind of sneak up on you and you may be seriously struggling before you even notice. If others in your circle of friends and family state that they are concerned about you, you should seek counsel from your midwife that day. She may be able to set their mind at ease or get you the help you need before you are overwhelmed. Signs of postpartum depression include feelings of anxiety, general sadness, sleep issues, lack of desire to bond with your baby, consistent irritability, feeling guilty, feeling worthless or not needed, loss of appetite or desire to eat all of the time, thoughts of harming yourself, your baby, or another family member.

Some things your friends or family may notice include changes in appearance (lack of self care), loss of appetite, self-destructive comments, comments about you not being good enough, or general sadness. They may see something in you that you can't yet see. If a friend or family member makes a comment and is concerned about your well-being, please take them seriously. Call your midwife and share their concerns. Your midwife can help you by asking questions and getting answers from you that will let her know how you are handling life after pregnancy. She has the resources to get you help if you need it. She can also give you some self-help tools.

Many things can cause postpartum depression. Most of them are treatable with herbs, homeopathics, and medications. Treatment is a phone call away.

Resources

www.postpartumprogress.com

www.marchofdimes.com (search for postpartum depression)

www.psycom.net

postpartumhealthalliance.org/screening-test/ (please contact your midwife with results)

If you feel like harming yourself or your baby right now, call 911!