

perinatal mood disorders

Also known as:

PERINATAL ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION or ANTENATAL AND POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

WHAT DOES IT ACTUALLY MEAN?

Women who experience a depressed mood during the perinatal period (ie pregnancy to one year post partum) for 2 weeks or more that is impacting on their life. The symptoms may include tearfulness, changes to sleep and eating patterns, feeling overwhelmed, anxious, angry, tired, hyperactive. Around 20% of women and 10% of their partners will experience perinatal anxiety and depression.

DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH DIAGNOSIS.

Perinatal mood disorders are multi-factorial with a biological, psychological and social basis. Hormones and chemicals play a role, as does the media, portraying motherhood as blissful and mothers as beautiful. General life experiences (past or present) and stressful events (such as moving/renovating, financial concerns), and issues related to the pregnancy and birth are also factors. Many mothers do not have realistic expectations of motherhood and the major bio-psycho-social changes that occur. When the reality is exhausting, repetitive and isolating, the transition from independent to invisible can be a shock.

Many women do not want to admit they are not living up to societal or their personal expectations. Other women are not able to articulate their feelings. Women do not want to be judged as mad, bad or sad.

There is under-reporting by women and misdiagnosis by professionals. Referral pathways are difficult.

GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP

Because perinatal mood disorders are experienced differently by everyone it is essential that professional advice is sought and a treatment approach is developed taking into account each person's individual circumstances. For many, professional counselling may be considered the most effective treatment. Antidepressant medication can be prescribed in conjunction with counselling, but should be carefully monitored. Professionals who can help include: GP, midwife, obstetrician, ECHC nurse, psychologist, psychiatrist and supported play group.

There are differences in the nature, severity and duration of symptoms of perinatal mood disorders and professional help is recommended in order to diagnose and then identify the best approach to treatment.

General Practitioners

General Practitioners are generally the first step in seeking professional help. Some GP's have an interest in PND and will identify an optimal treatment plan for you.

Furthermore, an increasing number of GP's are registered with the Better Outcomes Project and can refer you to a Social Worker or Psychologist trained in the psychological assessment and the treatment of PND. The Better Outcomes Project enables you to have a number of sessions with a Rebate via Medicare.

Remember that your Obstetrician or Paediatrician can also assist you in seeking help if you let them know that you need help.

Social Workers / Psychologists / Psychiatrists

These professionals are skilled in psychological assessment and in a variety of treatment approaches and can be accessed in private practice or may be part of a medical/counselling practice. They will assess your individual/family needs and tailor a treatment plan to meet your needs.

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Early Childhood Health Centres

A number of projects going on and much greater awareness within nursing community of perinatal mood disorders.

Helplines

PANDA national phone line: 1300 726 306 (9.30–4.30 Mon–Fri)

Tresillian 24-Hour Parents Help Line: (02) 9787 0855 or

Freecall 1800 637 357 (outside Sydney metropolitan area)

Group Programmes

Baby and Beyond Kirribilli Neighbourhood centre

<http://babyandbeyond.net.au>

Tresillian

<http://www.tresillian.net>

Karitane

<http://www.karitane.com.au/newframe.htm>

Dr Verad Gordon, PND Group, Mona Vale – 9979 6966

Mother and Baby Unit

St John of God, Burwood – ph: 9715 9214

Self help websites

<http://www.feelbetter.org>

This is an interactive program offering skills and training in cognitive restructuring, is self paced and organised in eight chapters and easy to navigate

<http://www.moodgym.anu.edu.au>

Another CBT program comprising five modules based on cognitive restructuring, relaxation, pleasant events, assertiveness training and problem solving. This also contains a clinician manual.

<http://www.bluepages.anu.edu.au>

This is a comprehensive source of depression information that covers symptoms and treatments for depression, help, resources and depression and anxiety quizzes. This is a good website to improve depression literacy

Organisations with good websites

PANDA Post and Antenatal Depression Association Inc

<http://www.panda.org.au>

National helpline: 1300 726 306

BeyondBlue

http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link_id=94

Black Dog Institute

<http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/public/depression/inpregnancypostnatal/babyblues.cfm>

Book

Overcoming Postnatal Depression

Family Support Network Inc, Lismore, 2008.

Email: bondingwithbaby@familynet.ngo.org.au

T: 02 66212489