

If I had Postnatal Depression after my last baby could it happen again?

If you had postnatal depression after a previous baby, there will be a 1 in 5 chance of recurrence after the birth of your next baby. Being informed and knowing what help and treatments are available, helps with early identification and speedy resolution.

Finally

Postnatal depression is an illness and can be debilitating. It can vary from mild to severe and in the length of time it lasts. There is support available to help you get through this.

You will feel better.

Recommended further reading

Coping with Postnatal Depression: Light at the end of the Tunnel

By Mary Pigot

The Columba Press, 1996

Available from all good bookstores.

Support Groups:

Postnatal Distress Support Groups are very helpful. You can meet other mothers who know what it feels like to have postnatal depression. You will have the opportunity to talk through your experience without being judged. You are not alone.

Information on local support groups is available from your local maternity hospital or the maternity unit of your local hospital.



Parentline

Help and support for women and their families suffering with postnatal depression.

Carmichael House
North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7
Tel 1890 927 277
www.parentline.ie

Cuidiú – Irish Childbirth Trust

A mother-to-mother community based support groups.

Tel 01 8724501
www.cuidiu-ict.ie
email: info@cuidiu-ict.ie

Samaritans

Tel 1850 60 90 90



HEALTH
PROMOTION
UNIT

Postnatal Depression

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What is Postnatal Depression?

Postnatal Depression is a condition that affects more than 10 % of women after they have a baby. It may happen anytime in the first year after the baby is born, but is most common in the early weeks and months after delivery. It is different from the 'baby blues', which affect most women in the days after having a baby.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms or complaints are:

- Low mood, often described as a dark cloud overhead.
- Crying frequently for no reason, feeling sad and lonely.
- Feeling tense, irritable and angry, sometimes afraid of being left alone with the baby.
- Feeling anxious and fearful, worrying about your own health and that of the baby.
- Feelings of not being able to cope are common, feeling inadequate as a person and as a mother.
- Feeling tired and lacking energy, often feeling unable to concentrate and finding simple tasks confusing and difficult.
- Physical symptoms of anxiety are common, such as stomach churning or pain, nausea and loss of appetite. Tightness in the chest or panic attacks may also occur.

- Difficulty in getting to sleep and staying asleep, even when the baby is sleeping.
- Sometimes when postnatal depression is very severe, you may have thoughts about harming yourself or the baby.

What should I do?

- 1 Tell somebody that you feel low. Often just talking and knowing that someone is there to help, can ease your feelings of depression.
- 2 If you feel you cannot cope tell your partner, close family member or friend that you need some help.
- 3 Self help:
 - Plan extra rest and relaxation including time away from the baby.
 - Eat well, a little and often even if not hungry.
 - Exercise regularly; even a short walk is helpful.
 - Don't try to do everything yourself, it takes up too much energy.
 - Learn to recognise your needs and ask for help.
 - Find ways to be kind to yourself, treat yourself.
 - Try to speak openly to your partner about how you feel or how he might help.
- 4 If the symptoms last longer than seven to ten days talk to your Public Health Nurse, Family Doctor or Hospital Doctor about how you are feeling. They are there to help and support you. Early diagnosis and treatment result in a speedier recovery.

What help is available?

Public Health Nurse: Your Public Health Nurse has knowledge of postnatal depression and can offer information regarding possible local supports. These supports could include counselling, referral to the family doctor or other health professionals.

Family Doctor: Your family doctor is there to help you. Your doctor may suggest that some specialist help would be valuable at this time, or may refer you to local support groups.

If your condition is more severe, your doctor may suggest a course of tablets known as antidepressants. These can take up to 2-3 weeks to start working and have to be taken every day. Even when you feel better you need to take them for the period recommended by your doctor, usually 4-6 months. Antidepressants are not addictive. Some antidepressants are safe to take if you are breastfeeding.

Hospital Doctor: If you attend the hospital for your six week check-up, tell the doctor how you are feeling, they can provide you with help and support.

Social Workers: Medical Social Workers are available in your Maternity Hospital to offer advice and information to women who experience Postnatal Depression. They will work with you in a supportive way.

