

## **Postpartum Depression**

*Baby Blues is a misleading name for normal postpartum mood changes. That's because women with baby blues don't feel sad most of the time. What they do experience is intense emotional responsiveness. They react more strongly — and feel emotions more deeply — than usual. Their moods change more often. Most women with baby blues cry often, but they are just as likely to cry from happiness as they are from sadness.*

*Postpartum emotional reactivity usually peaks at about three to five days after the baby is born, just when the breast milk is coming in. This is probably not a coincidence. Oxytocin, the hormone that causes milk letdown, peaks at this time. Oxytocin affects a new mother's brain, priming her to bond with her child. It influences the parts of the brain that determine moods, deepening emotions.*

*Women with baby blues don't need medical treatment, but do need understanding, support and enough sleep. Under those circumstances, normal postpartum mood changes fade away after a few days or weeks. However, if a new mom is stressed and does not get enough support or sleep, the blues can turn into depression.*

### **Postpartum Depression**

*Postpartum depression is a serious illness requiring professional treatment. Women with postpartum depression feel sad, tearful or empty nearly all the time, and may have difficulty enjoying anything, including their new babies.*

*They also have some or all of the following symptoms:*

- **Changes in appetite: a loss of interest in food, or taking extra comfort in eating**
- **Unable to sleep**
- **Excessive, unwarranted guilt and/or self-doubt**
- **Feelings of hopelessness**
- **Difficulty concentrating or making everyday decisions**
- **Low energy**
- **Thoughts of death or suicide**

*Untreated postpartum depression can become chronic and recurrent. It can interfere with mother-infant bonding and parenting, and can increase the risk that the baby will grow up to suffer from depression or have behavioral or learning problems. Fortunately, help is available.*

### **Solutions**

*Postpartum depression can be treated with psychotherapy, medication or both. If you have any symptoms, talk to your doctor. We can refer you to a specialist that can determine which treatment, including medication, is best for you, they will take whether you are breastfeeding or not into account. In addition, they will speak to your family about how best they can help you during your recovery.*

*When our patients report symptoms to us before or at her six-week postpartum checkup, we will refer you to a psychologist for therapy. This short-term psychotherapy will help you reduce self-blaming thoughts and gain confidence in your new role as a mother. Antidepressant medication may be recommended for women who are breastfeeding.*

***Talk to us and let us help you enjoy your new family!***

***Call 954-436-7667***

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