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## The Blues, PNMD and Postpartum Psychosis

### Postpartum Blues (the Baby Blues):

Up to **80%** of mothers can get the “blues” within 3-5 days of giving birth.

- You may have rapid mood swings.
- You may feel helpless, worried or irritable.
- You may cry for what seems like no reason.

These are normal feelings and responses when women have the postpartum blues. They usually pass in a week or two.

### Postnatal Mood Disorders (PNMD):

Can affect between **10%** and **25%** of mothers.

- Can begin during pregnancy or right after giving birth. They can also happen anytime in the first year after delivery.
- Include Postpartum Depression, Postpartum Anxiety, Postpartum Mania, and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Depression and Anxiety are the most common.
- If you have PNMD you may:
  - Feel tired, worried, anxious or panicky.
  - Feel worthless.
  - Feel “numb”. This makes it seem you are unable to care about things you usually would care about.
  - Feel irritable or angry.
  - Feel you are not good enough.
  - Feel resentment toward your baby.
  - Have crying spells for what seems like no reason.
  - Find it hard to stay focused or feel like your thoughts are disorganized.
  - Have guilty thoughts.
  - Be unable to sleep or rest properly.
  - Have frightening thoughts which may include fear of harming yourself or the baby.
  - Feel hopeless about the future.
  - Have thoughts of ending your life.
  - Have repetitive, intrusive thoughts.
  - Find yourself avoiding friends and family.

A woman suffering from PNMD will usually experience several of the above symptoms ranging from mild to severe. She may have good days and bad days. Although PNMD is different for every woman, the symptoms are always distressing and often leave a woman feeling ashamed and isolated.

**Postpartum Psychosis** is quite rare. It only occurs in about **0.1%** of women, usually within the first three weeks after giving birth. Women suffering Postpartum Psychosis may have hallucinations or delusions. Other symptoms can include severe insomnia, agitation, and bizarre feelings and behavior. Postpartum psychosis is a serious emergency that requires immediate medical help.

## PNMD Myths

You can just “snap out of it”.

PNMD will not affect your mothering skills.

You won't recover from PNMD.

Only “weak”, “lazy” or “bad” mothers get PNMD.

## PNMD Facts

If you are having moderate to severe PNMD you need to be treated.

**Depressed moms cannot just change their symptoms.**

Untreated, PNMD affects your ability to bond with your baby. It may also affect your child's functioning in preschool.

There is a very good chance that **you will recover** from PNMD when you are treated for it.

Major depression is a biological illness (chemical imbalance in the brain) that can be inherited.

**Having PNMD is *NOT* a reflection of your mothering skills.**

## What to do:

Women with symptoms of PNMD should have a physical exam to rule out problems like a thyroid disorder as well as having a psychological assessment. Research supports that often the best way to treat a woman who has a PNMD is by combining a number of different approaches which can include one-on-one counseling, support groups, lifestyle changes, and / or medication.

Talk to your family doctor, obstetrician, midwife, a public health nurse, or a psychiatrist.

The Women's Health Care Centre also offers help for women with Postnatal Mood Disorders. Call us for information about free, confidential education and individual counseling for new mothers, as well as books and videos on PNMD, hormones, and life with a newborn that you can borrow.

### This information and advice was taken from:

A guide to postpartum blues and postpartum depression. Reproductive Mental Health, 2006. BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre. [www.bcwomens.ca](http://www.bcwomens.ca)

Women's Health Matters – Health Centres – Pregnancy – Life with a Newborn – Postpartum Blues/Depression. [www.womenshealthmatters.ca](http://www.womenshealthmatters.ca)

Canadian Mental Health Association. [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)