



ITEC



VTCT

UMH5 – Understanding post-natal depression

Learning outcomes

LO1 Understand post-natal depression

LO2 Understand the causes of post-natal depression

LO3 Understand how post-natal depression can affect individuals and others

LO4 Understand how to manage and support people experiencing post-natal depression



LO1: Content and Assessment criteria

- 1.1. Describe what is meant by the term post-natal depression
- 1.2. Differentiate between 'baby blues' and post-natal depression
- 1.3. Describe the signs and symptoms of post-natal depression



Definitions and descriptions

- **Post-natal depression** is often defined as depression occurring within the first year following childbirth. (Dennis & Dowswell 2013)
- Other relevant terminology:
 - **Perinatal depression** – a mood disorder that can affect women during pregnancy and after childbirth
 - **Prenatal depression** – depression that begins during pregnancy
 - **Postpartum depression** – depression that begins after the baby is born, sometimes used instead of postnatal depression



Post-natal depression facts and figures

In pregnancy depression and anxiety are the most common mental health problems affecting around 12-13% of women (NICE Clinical Guideline 2014)

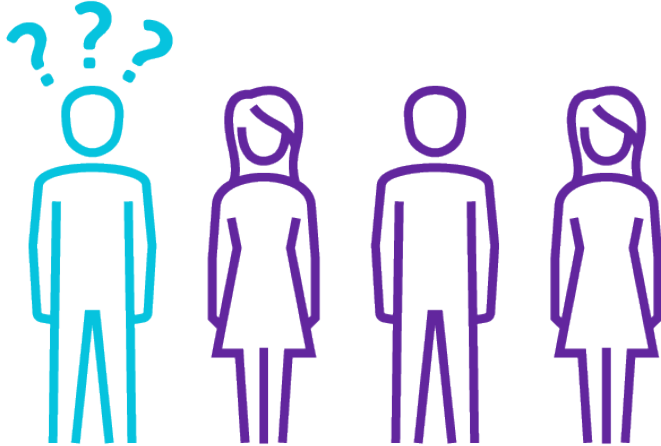


Low mood after childbirth (sometimes called 'baby blues') is very common, occurring in 30% to 80% of women in the first weeks (NICE Clinical Guideline 2014)



Post-natal depression facts and figures

Being a single parent and socioeconomic deprivation increases the rate of prevalence of postnatal depression (NICE Clinical Guideline 2018)



Post-natal depression is a common problem, affecting more than 1 in every 10 women within a year of giving birth



‘Baby blues’ and post-natal depression

- Baby blues refers to low mood after childbirth, usually presenting after the second or third day following childbirth and typically resolving by the 5th day
- It is usually mild and transient and needs to be differentiated from clinical depression in the post-natal period. Generally no specific treatment is required
- If mood changes and feelings of anxiety or unhappiness are severe or last longer than 2 weeks, a woman may have post-natal depression
- Women with post-natal depression generally will not feel better unless treatment is provided



Common signs and symptoms of post-natal depression

The symptoms of post-natal depression can vary from person to person. Some of the more common symptoms include:

- Low mood. Tends to be worse first thing in the morning, but not always
- Lack of interest or enjoyment generally
- Lack of interest in yourself and your baby
- Lack of motivation to do anything
- Often feeling tearful
- Feeling irritable a lot of the time
- Feelings of guilt, rejection, or not being good enough
- Poor concentration (like forgetting or losing things) or being unable to make a decision about things



LO2: Content and Assessment criteria

2.1. Outline the risk factors and possible causes of post-natal depression



Risk factors and possible causes of post-natal depression

Many possible risk factors may be present for developing post-natal depression. There appears to be no one single cause. However, risk factors can be grouped into social, psychological and biological risk factors:

- **Social risk factors:**

- Socioeconomic status
- Exposure to trauma, negative life events and stress, e.g. relationship issues, loss of job, bereavement
- Domestic violence
- Migration status
- Relationship and social support. Low partner support, marital difficulties
- Reproductive intention



Risk factors and possible causes of post-natal depression

Risk factors can be grouped into social, psychological and biological risk factors:

- **Psychological risk factors:**

- Personality traits – high neuroticism
- Prior psychopathology – depression or anxiety in pregnancy
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic experiences before, during pregnancy or childbirth
- Family history of any psychiatric illness
- Eating disorders. These may be present prior to pregnancy or may appear post pregnancy
- Substance misuse



Risk factors and possible causes of post-natal depression

Risk factors can be grouped into social, psychological and biological risk factors:

- **Biological risk factors:**
 - Multiple births
 - Chronic illness or medical illness
 - Pre-term birth, low birth weight



LO3: Content and Assessment criteria

- 3.1. Explain the effects of post-natal depression on the mother and baby
- 3.2. Describe how post-natal depression can affect friends and family



Effects of post-natal depression on the mother and baby

- Post-natal depression may influence the way you feel about your baby for example:
 - Feeling guilty that you don't feel the way you expected to
 - Feeling that you may or may not love your baby
 - Not feeling close to your baby
 - Finding it hard to work out what your baby is feeling, or what your baby needs
 - Resenting the baby or blaming the baby for the way you feel
- Feelings of stress and anxiety due to:
 - The pressure to be happy and excited
 - Feeling like you have to be on top of everything
 - Worried you're a bad parent if you're struggling with your mental health
 - Worried that someone will take your baby away from you if you are open about how you're feeling



Effects of post-natal depression on friends and family

- It can be very frustrating and upsetting for friends and family of somebody experiencing post-natal depression
- This can be exacerbated by lack of understanding of the condition or if the individual experiencing post-natal depression doesn't wish to seek help
- This may be due to them feeling judged or viewed as a bad parent
- The signs and symptoms outlined above may be experienced by the friend or family member and impact them in different ways
- The partner may feel left out and therefore resentful
- Fathers can experience depression after the birth of the baby. This may be more likely if the mother has post-natal depression



LO4: Content and Assessment criteria

- 4.1. Describe how to reduce the risks of post-natal depression
- 4.2. Describe the treatments available for post-natal depression
- 4.3. Outline two organisations available to help with the management and support of post-natal depression



Reducing the risks of post-natal depression

Psychosocial and psychological interventions have been shown to significantly reduce the number of women who develop postpartum depression.

- **Types of Psychosocial interventions:**

- Antenatal and post-natal classes. The mother is also encouraged to include partner
- Home visits by either professionals or lay people, or telephone support
- Telephone support provided by women who have had post-natal depression
- Early post-partum follow up care

- **Types of psychological interventions:**

- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Interpersonal psychotherapy



Reducing the risks of post-natal depression

- General advice can include:
 - Try not to do too much, try not to get over-tired
 - Make friends with other women who are pregnant or who have just had a baby
 - Find somebody to talk to
 - Be prepared to accept help from friends and family
 - Tell others how you are feeling
 - Make a Wellbeing Plan
 - Don't stop taking anti-depressant medication
 - If you have had depression before, keep in touch with your GP and health visitor as early recognition of symptoms is valuable



Treatments available to help manage post-natal depression

The Nice guidelines provide a detailed road map of treatments available dependent on the mother's symptoms.

<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/depression-antenatal-postnatal/management/postnatal-new-episode/>

- Treatments may include:
 - Talking treatments
 - Medication



Treatments available to help manage post-natal depression

Talking treatments

- Some mothers find it easier to talk to a trained professional rather than a friend or family member
- Cognitive behavioural therapy can be very useful in helping a mother understand her thoughts and feelings and explore ways to alter these
- Interpersonal therapy helps the individual identify problems with relationships with family and friends and how they may relate to the condition
- Guided self-help, using a range of self-help media based along the same lines as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy



Treatments available to help manage post-natal depression

Medication

- If the depression is severe or talking therapies have not proved successful, then a range of medications is available, e.g. antidepressants
- A combination of medication and therapy is sometimes used
- An overview of medications is available in the NICE guidelines as above



Organisations available to help with the management and support of depression

- NHS. A GP can provide access to specialist antenatal care. The NHS also provides access to perinatal mental health services. These include specialist nurses and doctors based in a dedicated hospital ward known as a mother and baby unit
- Community mental health teams (CMHTs) and crisis teams
- Voluntary organisations and charities, for example:
 - The Association for Post-Natal Illness (APNI) is the leading organisation in its field. It is a Registered Charity (No. 280510) and it was established in 1979 to: Provide support to mothers suffering from post-natal illness and increase public awareness of the illness
- National Institute of Mental Health – brochures and factsheets on perinatal depression





Learning check

- **Identify one** type of medication used to treat post-natal depression
- **Outline** the difference between CBT and interpersonal therapy
- **Identify two** psychosocial interventions for post-natal depression
- **Describe** how post-natal depression can affect friends and family
- **Outline two** ways in which post-natal depression may make you feel about a baby
- **Identify two** social, and **two** psychological risk factors for post-natal depression
- **Identify five** common signs and symptoms of post-natal depression
- **Describe** the difference between post-natal depression and 'baby blues'
- **Outline** the difference between *post-natal* depression and *perinatal* depression

