

Vertaling van: 'Feeling depressed after childbirth'

If you have just given birth, you are confronted with a lot of physical, emotional and social changes. Around the third or fourth day after childbirth you may feel down. You feel irritable, have sleeping difficulties or cry without any apparent reason. This is normal and will pass. Try to take sufficient rest. Talk about your feelings.

If these feelings last longer than 10 to 14 days after childbirth, do not hesitate to talk about it to your district nurse of the Child and Family Agency, or to your doctor or midwife. If you are feeling down, irritable, anxious and depressed for weeks or months, you can suffer from a postnatal depression. 10 to 20% of mothers suffer from this disorder. Postnatal depression is usually triggered by physical causes combined with personal life experiences and characteristics. It often starts within 6 weeks after childbirth and is very similar to other types of depression. Not just the mother, but her partner as well may suffer from depression.

Signs and symptoms

Young mothers are often tired due to lack of sleep, and are very worried. In mothers suffering from postnatal depression, however, these symptoms are so bad that they have difficulty in carrying out their daily activities. The most common symptoms are:

- low mood and pessimistic thoughts
- lack of interest and initiative
- not being able to enjoy the baby very much
- no maternal instinct or being overly concerned for the baby
- extreme fatigue and loss of energy
- crying fits
- irritability and aggressive outbursts (cursing, blaming, etc.)
- concentration problems, being confused and forgetful
- insomnia or an extreme need for sleep
- lack of appetite or excessive appetite
- lack of self-confidence
- feeling dead or empty inside
- feeling powerless, worthless, desperate, guilty and anxious, and having a high tendency to worry
- more general complaints like headache, dizziness and nausea
- having thoughts of death and suicide

What to do?

Take these symptoms seriously and try to accept that you are not feeling the way you would like to. Talk to the people around you about your feelings and worries, even if this is not easy. Making 'mistakes' is OK: learning to be a mother has its ups and downs. Take your time and rest sufficiently (with and without your baby).

Allow your partner, friends, relatives, etc. to help you with household chores and with the care of your baby. Ask your district nurse, doctor or midwife for advice. They can signpost you to suitable help. If you are diagnosed with postnatal depression, this can be adequately treated. However, if left untreated, the depression can last for years.

Tips for the environment

Talk to the mother about her feelings and thoughts. Help her feel less guilty about her negative thoughts. It is especially important to show understanding, compassion and willingness to truly listen. Discuss with each other which part of the care for the child and the household chores can be taken over. This will give the mother more time for herself. Do not take aggressive outbursts personally. If the mother expresses her feelings to someone, it means she feels safe. Look for support yourself if things are getting too much for you. If you are worried, consult the district nurse, doctor or midwife.