



Life with a new baby:

*Dealing with Postpartum Mood Disorders
Facilitator's Guide and Participant Handout*

*best start
meilleur départ*)

by/par health *nexus* santé

Introduction

The Video:

This video is for new and expectant parents and their families. It aims to make families aware of the emotional challenges of adjusting to **life with a new baby**. The video explores normal adjustment, the myths of motherhood, postpartum blues, postpartum depression and other postpartum mood disorders. The video includes interviews with real mothers and their families, with different risk factors and symptoms, and how they deal with postpartum mood disorders of different severities. It also illustrates a variety of self-care and healing strategies.

The Facilitator's Guide:

The guide is designed to assist facilitators to introduce the topic of postpartum mood disorders. It aims to create discussions around five specific areas:

- 1) Parenthood: myths, expectations and adjustments;
- 2) Getting support, taking care of yourself and the “postpartum blues”;
- 3) Postpartum mood disorders: symptoms & effects on family;
- 4) Getting help and getting better;
- 5) Risk factors and recovery.

The guide also has a section that can be used as a participant's handout. This section can be photocopied.

Introduction of the video:

The video shows how real mothers have coped with the emotional adjustment to **life with a new baby**. When using the video as a tool, the facilitator can:

- 1) Introduce the video;
- 2) Show the video in sections using the discussion starters and questions to facilitate discussions; or
- 3) Show the entire video and discuss the topic at the end using selected questions to highlight the needs of the group or individual.

The facts quoted will help the facilitator understand and focus on the important aspects of each section. **These facts do not need to be shared with the viewers.**

Before starting the video

A) Exploring expectations about new parenthood.

Discussion starter: *What do families expect after the birth of the baby? Talk about physical challenges, such as recovery from a c-section, constipation, hemorrhoids, fatigue, postpartum blues.*

Questions to ask:

How do you think you will feel after the baby is born?
Physically? Emotionally?

Fact # 1

More women will suffer from postpartum blues than from any other physical postpartum condition. Up to 80% of new mothers experience the postpartum blues.

Show video section 1

B) Parenthood: myths, expectations and adjustments.

Discussion starter: *Many people believe that birth and motherhood are simple, natural and joyous. They think all mothers will love their babies and instinctively know how to parent right from birth.*

Questions to ask:

What did mothers in the video express? What are your own expectations? What do you think your family expects of you?

Fact # 2

Many people have unrealistic expectations of mothers and motherhood.

Show video section 2

C) Getting support, taking care of yourself and the "postpartum blues".

Discussion starter: Motherhood requires a lot of emotional and physical adjustment. Many people prepare for the physical adjustment, but not for the emotional adjustment.

Questions to ask:

What can family and friends do to help you physically? What can they do to help you emotionally? How can your partner support you? How can you discuss your needs with your partner, your family and friends?

Fact # 3

Postpartum blues does not require treatment, but will be easier to cope with if mom uses self-care strategies and has family or other supports in place.

Show video section 3

D) Postpartum mood disorders: symptoms and effects on family.

Discussion starter: *There are many different symptoms of postpartum mood disorders. Not all mothers feel depressed; some may feel anxious or over-protective.*

Questions to ask:

Which symptoms did the mothers in the video have? Which symptoms surprised you and why? How did the partner feel? How did the family feel? What effects do you think it will have on the family and on the baby?

Fact # 4

Postpartum depression occurs in 13% of mothers, and 26% of teen mothers.

Fact # 5

Symptoms of postpartum mood disorders must last more than two weeks and include either sadness or a loss of interest/pleasure. Using a screening tool such as the *Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale* will help detect postpartum mood disorders.

Fact # 6

When mothers suffer from postpartum depression, fathers can also become depressed.

Fact # 7

Severe, chronic depression may affect mother-infant attachment and child development.

Show video section 4

E) Getting help and getting better.

Discussion starter: *Unlike postpartum “blues”, mothers with postpartum mood disorders usually need help to get better. Even when untreated, some mothers will recover, but it can take a long time and will affect the entire family.*

Questions to ask:

Why do you think mothers do not ask for help and treatment? Which health care providers would you turn to? Which healing strategies are mentioned in the video? Which strategies would you feel comfortable with? What if the strategies you chose were not working for you, what could you do? What kind of help is available in your community?

Fact # 8

Different treatments work for different mothers. Sometimes a combination of strategies is needed.

Fact # 9

If a mother has support from a partner or close family member her recovery is usually faster and easier.

Show video section 5

F) Risk factors and recovery.

Discussion starter: *Some women are at higher risk for developing PPMD. Some of the risk factors are temporary (e.g., a move) and some can be modified (e.g., marital problems). Mothers with risk factors are more vulnerable... but it can happen to anyone.*

Questions to ask:

What are the risk factors mentioned in the video? Do you think you have any of these? What kind of support do you think you can benefit from?

Fact # 10

Symptoms can present during pregnancy. Prenatal mood disorders are one of the main risk factors. Treatment of prenatal mood disorders will increase postpartum coping skills.

Fact # 11

80% of mothers will recover from PPMD. Some will go on to suffer from chronic depression.

Fact # 12

Early detection and treatment of PPMD and continued support will increase a woman's rate and chance of recovery.

For more information visit www.lifewithnewbaby.ca

PPMD video guide: handout for participants

Postpartum “Blues”

Is considered normal. Affects up to 80% of new mothers. Occurs 3 to 4 days after birth. No treatment is required.

Symptoms: can last for up to two weeks.

- Crying spells
- Feeling sad
- Irritability
- Frustration

Postpartum Depression

Affects almost 15% of new mothers. If untreated, it can worsen and last well into the second year.

Symptoms: May develop anytime within the first year after birth and last more than two weeks:

- More intense and longer lasting symptoms than the postpartum blues or a loss of interest in activities that would usually bring you pleasure (e.g. reading, spending time with family and friends)
- Feelings of hopelessness, guilt or worthlessness
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Changes in eating & sleeping habits
- Having the opportunity to sleep but unable to do so
- Fearing that you might hurt yourself or your baby

Postpartum Anxiety

Symptoms may start suddenly or slowly.

Symptoms: last for more than 2 weeks

- Panic attacks
- Shortness of breath, chest pains, dizziness, sweating or a “lump in the throat”
- Excessive worrying about the baby’s or your own health

Postpartum “Pinks”

Appear to be coping extremely well but at risk to crash into a deep depression.

Symptoms:

- ▶ Extremely energetic and multitasking
- ▶ Feeling euphoric (high)

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Onset is the same as Postpartum Depression. Symptoms related to scary thoughts (often about harm coming to the baby) and strange behaviour can be very disturbing. These thoughts often disappear when they are brought out into the open and discussed.

Symptoms: last for more than 2 weeks

- ▶ Having repeated scary thoughts about the baby such as seeing the baby drown
- ▶ Acting in strange ways (such as washing the baby or baby items repeatedly or changing baby’s diaper repeatedly, even when not necessary)

Postpartum Psychosis

Occurs in 1 to 2 in 1,000 births. Least common mood disorder but is the most serious. This is a medical emergency that requires immediate treatment. Often requires hospitalization and medication.

Symptoms:

- ▶ Hallucinations (hearing or seeing things)
- ▶ Paranoia
- ▶ Extreme behaviour out of the ordinary

Notes:

Symptoms may start during pregnancy or after birth. Fathers are at greater risk for depression if the mother is depressed.

PPMD video guide: handout for participants

Are you at risk for Postpartum Mood Disorders?

Some women are more likely to get postpartum mood disorders.

You are more at risk if you:

- ▶ have been depressed during your pregnancy
- ▶ had depression or other mood disorders before
- ▶ have family members with mood disorders
- ▶ had a recent stressful life event
(a move or a loss in the family)
- ▶ have little social support
- ▶ are having relationship difficulties with close family members.

What can you do?

Ask for help. Talk to your partner, family, friends and health care provider. Delaying treatment may delay recovery.

Take care of yourself. Try to rest, eat healthy foods and get some fresh air and exercise.

Take time for yourself. Accept offers for help with household chores and baby care, so you can take a break.

Get counselling. There are many support groups and health care professionals that can help you to talk through your feelings.

Consider medication. Your health care provider may recommend medication. There are some medications that are safe to use while breastfeeding and antidepressants are not addictive.

**Remember... this is not your fault. There is help.
There is hope.**

What can a partner, family & friends do?

Listen and support her feelings. Encourage her to talk about her feelings. Don't tell her to, "Snap out of it," or "You should be happy to have a beautiful, healthy baby." Statements like these will only make her feel worse.

Support her decision to seek professional help. Assist her in finding a health care professional. Offer to go with her to appointments for added support.

Develop your relationship with the baby. This can provide the mother with a much needed break.

Ask her how you can help. Providing meals, doing household chores or looking after other children will be helpful.

Educate yourself about postpartum mood disorders.

Be patient. It takes time to recover.

Take some time for yourself. Ensure you have some time to do what you enjoy doing. You need a break too.

Make sure you have someone to talk to. A postpartum mood disorder is hard on everyone. Family, friends, your health care provider or a 24-hour crisis line can provide you with needed assistance.

If you or someone you know is experiencing any of the symptoms, get help now... Contact your health care provider (such as a doctor, nurse or midwife). For more information visit www.lifewithnewbaby.ca

Important phone numbers:



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This resource was developed by Hiltrud Dawson R.N., BT (Neonatal Nursing), IBCLC and Paola Ardiles HBSc (Psych), MHSc Best Start Resource Centre

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London, Ontario

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