



## **Postpartum Depression (PPD) FAQs Compiled by The Healing Group**

**Q: What is Postpartum Depression (PPD)?**

**A:** Postpartum depression (PPD), also called postnatal depression, is a form of clinical depression which can affect women during pregnancy and the first year post-partum or post-adoption.

**Q: Approximately how many women experience PPD?**

**A:** According to Postpartum Support International, approximately 1 in 8 women suffer from postpartum depression.

**Q: What are the common symptoms of PPD?**

**A:** Symptoms include sadness, fatigue, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, reduced libido, crying episodes, anxiety, and irritability. Although a number of risk factors have been identified, the causes of PPD are still not well understood.

**Q: What is the difference between the "baby blues" and PPD?**

**A:** The "baby blues" is a term used to describe symptoms of tearfulness, irritability, and fatigue that affect approximately 80% of all new moms shortly after baby's birth, lasting approximately 2-3 weeks. When women experience these symptoms more severely and persistently through baby's first year of life, they are facing a "real" medical illness called postpartum depression, or "perinatal depression."

**Q: Are there other related mood disorders that affect women following the birth of a baby?**

**A:** Yes, postpartum depression is an umbrella term that includes specific mood disorders women may experience after giving birth. Women experiencing **postpartum anxiety (PPA)** feel a strong sense of worry and fear around the health and safety of their baby. They typically feel a loss of control and may experience stronger symptoms such as shortness of breath and panic attacks. Other women may experience **postpartum obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)**, where they have repetitive, upsetting and unwanted thoughts or mental images. They may feel the need to do certain things over and over (compulsions) to reduce the anxiety caused by those thoughts. **Postpartum post-traumatic stress disorder** and **postpartum psychosis** are other less common mood disorders associated also associated with PPD.

**Q: What causes PPD? What can I do to prevent it?**

**A:** There is no one cause for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. Women who experience PPD and related mood disorders after pregnancy may have symptoms caused by a combination of psychological, social, and biological stressors. Hormonal fluctuations may also cause reactions in sensitive women. Risk factors do include a personal or family history of mood or anxiety disorders such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder (manic-depressive), or schizophrenia, and sensitivity to hormonal changes. It is important for women to recognize, however, that *developing PPD is not your fault!*

**Q: Can men experience PPD?**

**A:** Yes, contrary to popular belief men are not immune to PPD! In fact, at least 10% of fathers also experience PPD.

**Q: What are some of the common treatment options for PPD?**

**A:** Many women recover with a treatment consisting of counseling and/or a support group that offers social support and connection with others to remind them "we're all in this together." Through this type of support, women are encouraged to make time for more self-care, including proper rest, good nutrition, assistance with baby and other children, and caring for personal needs such as exercise, relaxation, or time with partner/spouse. Women with more severe cases of PPD may opt to utilize medication to cope with their depression and/or anxiety.

**Q: How long will my PPD last?**

**A:** It's important to recognize that PPD and related mood disorders are temporary and treatable, regardless of the severity of the symptoms. While recovery is different for every woman, those who seek out professional support and make connections with others tend to manage their symptoms more effectively and shorten their recovery time.

***About Kristin Hodson/The Healing Group:***

*Kristin Hodson is a licensed clinical social worker and founder of The Healing Group (THG) education and therapy clinic based in Salt Lake City. She specializes in pregnancy-related issues, working with individuals, couples and families and conducting classes, group sessions and professional training. For more information about Hey Mom or a complete list of The Healing Group's services, visit [www.thehealinggroup.com](http://www.thehealinggroup.com) or call 801-461-9060.*

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