

If you believe your family will understand how you are feeling at this time, talk to them.

### *Can postnatal depression recur?*

Yes, it is possible to suffer postnatal depression after the birth of subsequent children, but not always. Often the depression is less severe and can be minimised with the support of your health professional and family prior to the birth.

### *For further information contact:*

For on the spot advice call:  
Tresillian's 24hr Parents Help Line  
Ph: (02) 9787 0855 or  
Freecall: 1800 637 357 (outside Sydney)

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For further copies of this brochure please contact:



Manager - Education Department  
McKenzie Street, Belmore NSW 2192  
Telephone: 02 9787 0800 Fax: 02 9787 0880

Or

**Johnson & Johnson**

Freecall: 1800 640 617

### *Where can I get help?*

*You can seek help from any of the following:*

- Your early childhood nurse
- Your doctor
- Tresillian Family Care Centres or your local Family Care Centre
- Family support agencies such as local Community Health Centres.

# *Some Postnatal Feelings*



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### *What is the baby blues?*

The baby blues is a period of mood swings which you can experience soon after your baby is born. Up to 70% of women experience the baby blues, which lasts from only a few days to a couple of weeks.

### *What causes the baby blues?*

The baby blues may be caused by sudden changes in your hormone level around the time of baby's birth. However, there can be other causes. After all the anticipation and apprehension you may have felt before the birth of your baby, combined with the physical exertion of the birth itself, you might feel unprepared for the sheer weariness which overcomes you after the event. You will probably need lots of rest to get your strength back.

### *How will I feel if I get the baby blues?*

You could feel emotional and burst into tears for no particular reason. Some mothers feel very tense and anxious. They may worry about minor problems and often have trouble sleeping. Others may just feel generally unwell and excessively tired.

### *What is the difference between the baby blues and postnatal depression?*

The baby blues occurs during the first week or so after a baby's birth and lasts for a short while.

Postnatal depression is a condition which can last from several weeks to several months and affects at least 20% of mothers. Onset can be any time in the first year after the birth. Isolation from social networks and significant life events such as a death in the family or moving house are strongly linked to postnatal depression.

#### *Symptoms of postnatal depression:*

- Overwhelming feelings of anxiety or depressed mood
- Loss of control when usually competent
- Inability to cope ie. with household tasks
- Inability to think clearly or find the right words
- Tearfulness for no apparent reason
- Exhaustion and over-concern about lack of sleep
- Poor appetite or overeating
- Loss of sexual interest
- Fear of being alone
- Poor self-image
- Low self-worth

- Fear of social contact
- Irritability
- Apathy
- Obsessional thoughts or activities
- Exaggerated fears about health and safety of self, baby or partner
- Suicidal thoughts, plans or actions

Remember, it is normal for all mothers to experience times of emotional and physical exhaustion. If your depression or anxiety lasts more than two weeks, however, do not hesitate to seek help.

### *What should I do if I think I have postnatal depression?*

Try discussing your feelings with your early childhood nurse or your doctor. They may in turn refer you and your baby to a Family Care Centre where you and your baby will receive support, understanding and assistance as required.

Talk to your husband/partner or trusted family members and friends.

It is important that you should not continue to endure any distressing symptoms in the hope they will go away. Remember that postnatal depression can be treated successfully with the right help.

### *Treatment may include:*

- Counselling
- A group support programme where you have the opportunity to meet with other mothers who are experiencing feelings similar to yours
- Help with your baby's needs
- Appropriate medication treatment

Caring for yourself will help you to manage all the other things better.

### *Will I get better?*

Yes, you will get better. It may take a while, but with appropriate help you will feel better about the changes in your life.

### *Can I help myself?*

Yes, by seeking help when you recognise that you may have postnatal depression. It is important that you take the time to attend to your own needs when demands are being made of you, not only by your baby, but by other members in your family. Plan regular small amounts of time away from baby to recharge. Make sure you do not become isolated in your home. Pay special attention to your diet. Eat regular meals and try to get as much rest as often as your baby allows.