

## Further help

### First Response Service

If you or a loved one is in mental health crisis, you can call our 24-hour First Response Service on **111 (option 2)**. This service is for anyone, of any age, living in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Specially-trained mental health staff will speak to you and discuss with you your mental health care needs

### PANDAS: Pre and Postnatal Depression Advice and Support

Helpline: 0843 28 98 401. 09:00-20:00 every day

### Urgent Care Cambridgeshire

Dial 111

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Postnataldepression/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Postnataldepression/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

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### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns about any of CPFT's services, or would like more information please contact: Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on freephone 0800 376 0775 or e-mail [pals@cpft.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@cpft.nhs.uk)

### Out-of-hours' service for CPFT service users

Please call **NHS 111** for health advice and support.

If you require this information in another format such as braille, large print or another language, please let us know.

**HQ** Elizabeth House, Fulbourn Hospital, Cambridge CB21 5EF.

**T** 01223 219400

**F** 01480 398501

[www.cpft.nhs.uk](http://www.cpft.nhs.uk)



# Insight into post-natal depression

May 2018



Pride in our care

A member of Cambridge University Health Partners

## What is post-natal depression?

Post-Natal Depression (PND) is one of the most common illnesses suffered by women following childbirth. It is not unusual to feel emotional, anxious, depressed or irritable after giving birth. This is often known as the 'baby blues' but these feelings pass in the first couple of weeks.

PND is more severe and continues for a longer period of time. It may develop slowly and appear several weeks after the birth of the baby. You may feel increasingly low or over-anxious and looking after yourself or the baby might become difficult.

A single cause for PND is not known and many women suffer from PND when there is no obvious reason. However, relationship difficulties, money or housing worries, a sick baby, and previous experience of depression may be contributing factors. There could be increased risk if you have suffered PND before and it can sometimes run in families.

The good news is that with support and treatment you will recover and can start enjoying motherhood.

## What are the signs?

Many mothers do not recognise they are suffering from PND or that it is treatable. Common signs are:

- Anxiety / panic attacks
- Loss of libido
- Loss of appetite
- Loss of interest in the baby
- Sleeplessness / cannot get enough sleep
- Memory loss or lack of concentration
- Tearfulness and feeling unable to cope

Not everyone has all of these symptoms. Acknowledging them does not mean that you are a bad mother. Anyone can get PND.

Rarely, women suffer from puerperal psychosis, which is a very severe condition that usually comes on within days of giving birth. The symptoms can include extreme mood swings, irrational behaviour, severe depression and delusions. It requires prompt medical help and most women are admitted to hospital.

## What next?

If you experience some of the above symptoms for more than a short period of time you should talk to your GP, health visitor or community midwife. A combination of support from different people is most effective in tackling PND.

### Self-help

Whether or not you are receiving medical treatment there are ways you can help yourself.

- Most important is to believe that you will get better, even though it will take time
- Talk to other people - being a new mother can feel lonely and frightening. If you cannot confide in those close to you, call a confidential helpline or join a support group where you can meet other mothers
- Try to rest as much as you can
- Eat regularly and healthily and exercise
- Make time to do something for yourself

### Talking or psychological therapies

These involve talking and listening with a trained therapist, who will not judge you. You can ask your doctor for talking therapies regardless of medication or other treatments. Sometimes these are available at your doctor's surgery or health centre. Your doctor may refer you to a voluntary organisation or you can approach one yourself.

NHS talking therapies are free, but they may not be available locally or there may be a waiting list. Some people find that talking therapies can be hard work and may raise painful emotions or memories, but over time may feel the benefits. Others find it provides a release and helps to talk.

### Complementary or alternative therapies

These cover a range of treatments, some of which may provide benefits in treating PND. Therapies include herbal remedies, yoga, reiki, Indian head massage, homeopathy and reflexology. It is important that you use a properly qualified practitioner. You should always discuss complementary treatments with your doctor and let him/her know if you are using any and the results.

### Medication

Anti-depressant drugs are commonly used to treat PND. You cannot become addicted to them but, like other medicines, they may cause unwanted side effects. When choosing an anti-depressant your doctor will take into account if you are breast-feeding and any previous responses to similar medication. They will not work immediately but it is important that you persist with them and do not stop taking them without speaking to your doctor.