Depression: During and After Pregnancy

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression can be described as feeling sad, unhappy, or miserable. Most of us feel this way at one time or another for short periods. True clinical depression is a mood disorder in which feelings of sadness, loss, anger, or frustration interfere with everyday life for an extended time.

WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

There may be a number of reasons why a woman gets depressed. During pregnancy, these factors may increase a woman’s chance of depression:

- History of depression or substance abuse
- History of mental illness
- Little support from family or friends
- Anxiety about the pregnancy or baby
- Problems with previous pregnancy or birth
- Marital problems
- Financial problems
- Age of the mother

Depression during pregnancy is called perinatal depression. Depression after pregnancy is called postpartum depression. After pregnancy, hormonal changes in woman’s body may trigger symptoms of depression.

Other factors that contribute to postpartum depression include:

- Not getting enough rest
- Feeling overwhelmed with a new baby
- Feeling stress from changes in work and home routines
- Having feelings of loss - loss of identity, loss of control, loss of pre-pregnancy figure
- Having less free time.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION?

After Pregnancy, signs of depression may include being afraid of hurting the baby or oneself or not having any interest in the baby. Before, during, and after pregnancy other symptoms include:

- Feeling restless or irritable
- Feeling sad, helpless, and overwhelmed
- Crying a lot
- Having no energy

- Eating too little or too much
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Trouble focusing, remembering, or making decisions
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Withdraw from friends and family
- Headaches, chest pains, rapid heart rate, or hyperventilation.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “BABY BLUES,” POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION, AND POSTPARTUM PSYCHOSIS?

The baby blues can happen right after childbirth and normally go away within a few days to a week.

Postpartum depression can happen at any time within the first year after childbirth. The difference between postpartum depression and the baby blues is that postpartum depression often affects a woman’s well-being and keeps her from functioning well for a longer period of time. Postpartum depression needs to be treated by a doctor.

Postpartum psychosis is rare. Symptoms include delusions, hallucinations, sleep disturbances, and obsessive thoughts about the baby.

HOW IS DEPRESSION TREATED?

If you’re experiencing symptoms, speak with your health care clinician. Your clinician can help you learn more about your options and decide what approach is best for you and your baby.

Treatment options include:

- Talk Therapy - talking to a therapist, psychologist, or a social worker to learn how depression makes your feel and act.
- Medication - antidepressant medicines can help relieve the symptoms of depression. The risks of taking medicine need to be weighed against the risks of depression and should be carefully discussed with your health clinician.

Learn how you can protect your health at: www.adagiohealth.org