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Understanding your Emotional Health and Wellbeing following the Birth of your Baby (Fathers)

Men go through a multitude of complex changes during the transition to fatherhood, making the postnatal period a particularly vulnerable time in a man's life.

Fathers can experience depression in the postnatal period resulting from the different demands placed on them. This is often known as paternal postnatal depression.

- Postnatal depression can affect up to 1 in 10 fathers, and first-time fathers are more prone to depression in the postnatal period.
- If the mother is depressed this increases the risk of depression in the father.
- If you are suffering from postnatal depression then you may experience irritability, increased anxiety, anger and aggression, changes in appetite, and loss of interest in things and activities that were once pleasurable.

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Understanding your Emotional Health and Wellbeing following the Birth of your Baby (Fathers)

- It is important to remember that every man's experience of postnatal depression will be different and not every father suffering from postnatal depression will experience all the symptoms.
- Postnatal depression can cause relationship difficulties between you and your partner, as well as difficulties relating to your baby's sleep patterns, feeding and development delays in the long term, if not treated.
- It could also lead to self-neglect and engagement in unhealthy behaviours such as excessive smoking, drinking, gambling, drug-use etc.
- As for mothers, postnatal depression can be lonely, distressing and frightening, but there are many treatments available. As long as it is recognised and treated, postnatal depression is a temporary condition that you can recover from.
- It is very important to seek help if you think you have postnatal depression. The condition is unlikely to get better by itself quickly and it could impact on the care of the baby.
- If you think you may have postnatal depression then contact your health visitor or GP, who will be able to offer you the right support and help. There is help available in different forms including self-help advice, talking therapies, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), and antidepressant medication.
- There are also a number of things that you can do to improve your emotional wellbeing following birth and reduce the risks of postnatal depression, such as:
 - Recognise that you may sometimes feel down or low about being a parent.
 - Allow time for yourself, away from work and family.
 - Make sure to talk to your partner, family and friends about how you are feeling.
 - Focus on the enjoyable aspects of parenting.
 - Try to maintain any important hobbies or social events.
 - It is important to avoid negative coping strategies, such as drinking too much or working too hard and staying away from home.
 - Take regular exercise.
 - Don't try to be "Superdad". Don't try to do everything at once. Make a list of things to do and set realistic goals.
 - Contact local support groups, such as Fathers' groups or national help lines for advice and support.

■ **Remember: don't despair. You're not to blame. Postnatal depression can affect anyone and it can be treated with the right support and help. The earlier you seek help, the better.**

More information:

NHS Choices:

bit.ly/1yCYxBA

The Fatherhood Institute:

bit.ly/1oxtrsr

Fathers Reaching Out: A support group/network for men whose wives or partners are suffering from post natal depression:

bit.ly/1zA5iIX

Mind:

bit.ly/1wMEMrP

Mind telephone:

0300 123 3393

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