

AWARE

**OVERCOMING DEPRESSION.
CHANGING LIVES.**

**LET'S TALK
ABOUT..**

**HELPING YOU
WITH POSTNATAL
DEPRESSION**

Postnatal Depression

Postnatal depression (PND) affects up to 15% of all mothers, and one third of these develop the symptoms during pregnancy.

Look Out For The Signs

These include tiredness, anxiety and irritability. But you may not have strong feelings of sadness or unhappiness with PND. This may mean you don't seek help, as you put these symptoms down to sleep loss and the demands of a new baby.



Is PND different from the 'baby blues'?

The 'baby blues' are experienced by about 60% of women, usually starting on the third day after birth. Symptoms include feeling tearful and/or irritable for little or no reason. These are due to hormonal changes and you should feel like this for one or two days, but no more than ten. PND generally starts a few weeks after the birth and lasts longer.



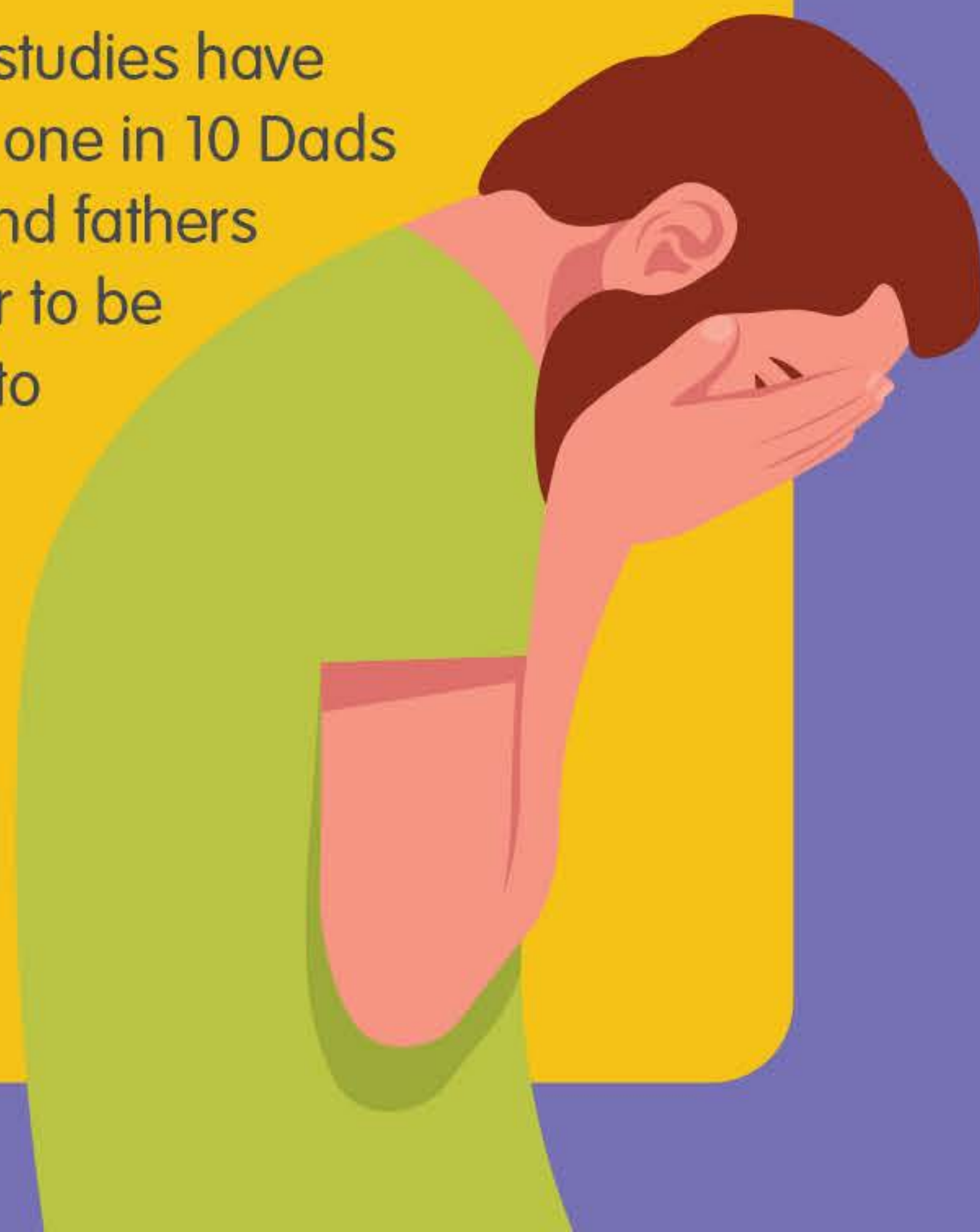
Are You at Risk?

You are more likely to have PND if you:

- Previously had mental health problems, including depression
- Had depression or anxiety during pregnancy
- Have little support from family or friends
- Had a recent stressful event e.g. bereavement, relationship ending, or losing a job
- Have current issues in your life such as relationship or money problems

Men are also at risk of developing postnatal depression.

In general, studies have shown that one in 10 Dads has PND, and fathers also appear to be more likely to suffer from depression three to six months after their baby is born.



How does PND affect you?

You may have some or all of the following symptoms:

Feeling really anxious – Most mothers worry about their baby. If you have PND, the worry can be overwhelming. You may worry that your baby is ill, not putting on weight, crying too much, or even worry about harming your baby. You may worry that you have a physical illness, or that you will never get better.

Irritability - with your partner, baby or other children.

Tiredness - all new mothers get tired but depression can make you feel exhausted and lacking energy.

Feeling sad - feeling worse at certain times of the day.

Sleeplessness - unable to fall asleep despite being tired. Lying awake worrying or waking during the night even when your baby is asleep. Waking too early, before your baby.

Appetite changes - poor appetite, forgetting to eat, or eating for comfort and then feeling guilty.

Loss of enjoyment - not enjoying or interested in anything, even your baby.

Loss of interest in sex - reduced libido.

Negative and guilty thoughts - You think things like I'm a bad mother, I cant cope, I dont love my baby leading to loss of confidence and feelings of guilt.

Mild, Moderate or Severe?

The number and severity of symptoms you experience will determine whether the depression is diagnosed as mild, moderate or severe.

A very small number of women with severe depression develop psychotic symptoms. They may hear voices and have unusual beliefs. If you feel this is happening to you, seek help from your GP right away. This is very treatable, and everything will be done to ensure you and your baby can stay together.

What Helps For Postnatal Depression?

Mild PND may get better with time and good support, but you should still see your GP or health visitor so that the symptoms can be monitored. They can help you decide if you do need treatment, and which is right for you.



The **Three** Main Types Of Help For Postnatal Depression Are:

1 Talking Therapies (psychotherapies)

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) has been proven very effective for mild/moderate depression and in preventing relapse. It works on the basis that if you change your unhelpful thinking patterns and behaviour it will improve how you feel.

Self-help books based on CBT, and computerised of therapy and counselling. Ask your GP to tell you about them. Any of these may be used with or without medication.

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2 Medication

Antidepressants are the most commonly prescribed and effective treatments for moderate or severe depression. It is important, however, to take them exactly as prescribed and only to stop taking them as and when advised by your GP.

They are not addictive, but stopping them suddenly or too soon may cause a relapse. They work by boosting certain brain chemicals that affect your mood. Any side effects usually disappear or are tolerable, although you should tell your GP as soon as possible if you experience them.

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3 Self-help strategies

When you feel depressed, you tend to do less and less because of the tiredness, difficulty sleeping and/or eating, and negative thinking. You stop doing things you used to enjoy. It can get so bad that you can't go to work, or do day-to-day things at home.

You stay in bed or stay at home doing very little and isolate yourself from friends and family. Increasing your activity levels can make a big impact on your mood, but it's important to get a balance of activities that give you a sense of closeness, achievement and pleasure.

Eat A Good Balanced Diet

Eat well and regularly, even if you don't feel like it.



Stay Active

Ask your health visitor if there are mother and baby exercise classes near you. Walk your baby regularly.

Avoid Alcohol

Especially when pregnant or breast-feeding, as it can harm your baby, otherwise, stick to recommended safe limits.

Don't Forget to Take Time

Plan rest and relaxation periods.



Remember

Most people with depression make a full recovery.

Make up for lost sleep

Take every opportunity to get some sleep or rest. Ask for help with night time feeds if you can, and try to sleep when your baby sleeps

The 5 most evidenced based steps to improving your mental health are:



1. Be Active - Exercise acts as an antidepressant. Research has shown that 50 minutes of brisk walking 4 times a week significantly reduces depression'.



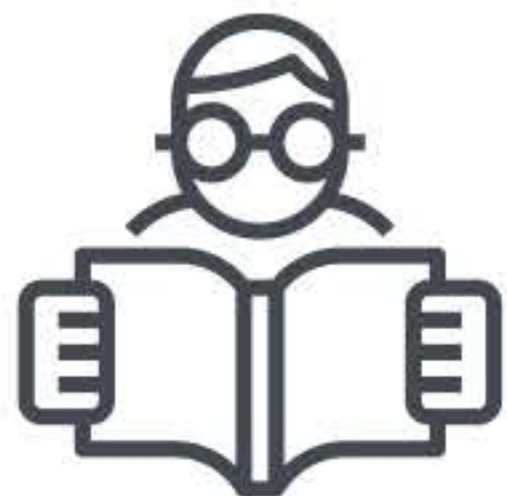
2. Take Notice - Savour the moment, be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.



3. Give - Do something nice for a friend or stranger. Smile. Volunteer your time, or consider joining a community group.



4. Connect - With the people around you. Family, friends, or neighbours. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.



5. Keep learning - Do not be afraid to try something new. Rediscover an old hobby or interest or simply set a challenge you will enjoy.



Do One Thing

Sometimes you may feel overwhelmed when taking steps to help yourself. But remember to focus on doing just one thing at a time. It will help you to reach the goals you set, and get a real sense of achievement.

Who to contact for support



Lifeline

Lifeline is a telephone help and counselling service for anyone in distress or despair. It is available 24/7 and is free to call from your mobile phone.

They can give you immediate support, offer you a face-to-face appointment, or give you information about other services in your area. **Call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.**

You could also

- See your doctor
- Call the out-of-hours GP service
- Go to the A&E department
- Call emergency services on 999
- Call Samaritans on their freephone helpline 116 123.

This is a confidential service that provides a listening ear to those in distress.

You can read our other guides for more information on help with depression, and looking after your mental health.

Find out how we can help and support you.
Please visit our website or contact us:

Visit: www.aware-ni.org.uk
Email: info@aware-ni.org
Call us: Belfast 028 9035 7820
Derry/L'Derry 028 7126 0602



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