



GidgetFoundation

www.gidgetfoundation.com.au

perinatal mood disorders

motherhood – moods, myths
and helpful messages



there's **mothercare** in everything we do

motherhood – moods, myths and helpful messages

Having a baby changes everything. Motherhood is a major life event that requires significant adjustments and the impact is often underestimated in our society. While this time can be remarkable and special it can also be relentless. Romantic notions of mothers and babies are often replaced by the realities of crying babies and sleepless nights. Most mothers feel overwhelmed at some time during this period of transition. In most cases mothers learn to manage the emotional and physical stresses of life with a new baby but some mothers may need extra support.

Mothers who find themselves struggling along day after day for more than two weeks may be suffering from perinatal anxiety and depression, a recognised medical condition. It is a result of biological, psychological and social factors. Nearly 20% of women who give birth in Australia and 10% of their partners, around 50,000 women each year are affected by a perinatal mood disorder. Left untreated, the impact on the mother, her child and other family members can be profound.

some common feelings and experiences of women suffering from a perinatal mood disorder can include

- inability to rest even when your baby is sleeping
- unable to enjoy activities you used to partake in prior to the baby's birth
- inability to concentrate, make decisions or get things done
- physical symptoms such as heart palpitations, constant headaches, sweaty hands, loss of appetite
- withdrawing from family and friends
- feeling that everyone including the baby would be better off without you
- feeling out of control, overwhelmed, or fear of going crazy
- fear that something bad may happen to your baby
- constant feelings of guilt or shame, grief and tearfulness, repetitive thoughts

- a continued feeling of numbness or rawness
- feeling there is no light at the end of the tunnel/feeling trapped

if you

- are unable to handle the intensity of what you are feeling or the physical sensations
- continue to feel numb or overly stressed
- feel like your emotions are not returning to 'normal'
- have disturbed sleeping and eating patterns
- feel isolated and find relationships with friends and family are suffering

you may find it is helpful to share your feelings and concerns with someone you trust

There are a number of health professionals and organisations that can help you:

- Early Childhood Health Centre Nurse
- GP
- Obstetrician
- Midwife

You may require a referral for professional counselling. There are GPs, psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers trained in counselling parents suffering from perinatal anxiety and depression.

organisations that can help

PANDA national phone line:

1300 726 306 (9.30–4.30 Mon–Fri)

Tresillian 24-Hour Parents Help Line:

(02) 9787 0855 or Free call 1800 637 357 (outside Sydney metropolitan area)

For more information contact

Gidget Foundation on

contact@gidgetfoundation.com.au

or www.gidgetfoundation.com.au

finding supportive help can make all the difference

where to find out more

visit www.mothercare.com.au

or call 1300 217 700