



# Postpartum Depression

## What is it? What you can do.

*"I know it's normal to have the 'baby blues.' Having a new baby is stressful. But my son is six weeks old. I thought being a new mom would be wonderful. But I'm sad, anxious, and sometimes just plain angry. I cry often. I've lost my appetite. I'm not sleeping, even when he's napping. I feel like I'm failing as a mother."*

### WHAT IS POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION?

Depression is more than just feeling blue or down in the dumps for a few days. Depression can be a serious illness that can impact your physical health and interfere with day-to-day life. New mothers can experience a unique form of depression in the days and months following delivery. This is often referred to as "Postpartum Depression" and can be caused by a variety of biological and social changes.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that 7% of new mothers will experience severe depression and more than 50% will experience mild to moderate depression. When depression becomes severe it can impact the mother's health, relationships, work performance, and even bonding with the baby.

All new mothers will have different experiences, and only a trained health professional can diagnose depression. Some of the most typical signs include:

- Feelings of sadness, despair, or hopelessness
- Frequent crying or tearfulness
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Lack of energy or motivation
- Loss of pleasure in activities you usually enjoy
- Difficulty doing typical daily chores
- Loss of appetite
- Feelings of guilt, anger, or anxiety
- Poor memory or concentration
- Over-concern for, or a lack of interest in, the baby
- Fear of "losing control"
- Worrying that you may hurt your baby
- A desire to escape from your baby or family
- Thoughts about hurting yourself or someone else

### RISK FACTORS

All new mothers are at increased risk for depression. But some factors can increase your risk.

- Personal or family history of depression or other mental illness
- Lack of support from family and friends
- Anxiety or negative feelings about the pregnancy
- Problems with a previous pregnancy or birth
- Marriage or money problems
- Stressful life events
- Young age
- Substance abuse

### TREATMENT AND SELF-HELP OPTIONS

There are many common, effective treatments for depression. Your doctor or a mental health professional can discuss these options in detail. For women experiencing mild symptoms of depression, a few things can help alleviate the symptoms.

- Get plenty of rest
- Maintain a healthy diet, particularly if breastfeeding.
- Stay physically active. Get some fresh air, alone or with your new baby.
- Relax your standards. Keep "perfectionism" and guilt in check. It's okay to feel a little frustrated, anxious and sad.
- Make time for yourself away from the baby. Engage in enjoyable activities for yourself.
- Join a support group or call on other new moms to talk and get support
- Accept help from others.
- Don't keep your feelings to yourself or stay isolated. Talk to others about how you are feeling.

### CATERPILLAR EAP

You can also access the services of Caterpillar's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). For confidential support, free of charge, contact **1-866-228-0565** or log onto **CaterpillarEAP.com**.