

ARC Mental Health Information Series

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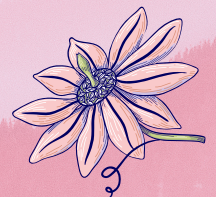
Postpartum Anxiety

5% of women who have given birth in the last 6 months will be diagnosed with postpartum anxiety. Up to 8% of women will experience postpartum anxiety and depression together. Causes include: drastic hormonal changes, sleep deprivation and feeling overwhelmed by the responsibilities of caring for a new baby. Women with postpartum anxiety have symptoms like the ones listed below much of the time, for a period 2 weeks or more.



Symptoms

- Increased heart rate
- Shortness of breath
- Inability to sleep
- Muscle tension in the back, neck and shoulders
- Stomachache
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Nervous thoughts that control your brain
- Recurring negative thoughts of worry and worst-case scenarios involving the baby's health
- Thoughts that you aren't a good enough mother
- Deliberately avoiding situations and interactions out of fear that something bad will happen
- Guilt and shame that you are not doing things right
- Irritability and frustration
- Restlessness and tension



Screening

Researchers in Western Australia developed and tested the Perinatal Anxiety Screening Scale or PASS to specifically screen for a broad range of anxiety symptoms during pregnancy and the postpartum period. This 31-item questionnaire is easy to complete and score, is sensitive to how anxiety presents in perinatal women and may be used in a variety of settings. This scale assesses four categories of anxiety: (1) acute anxiety and adjustment, (2) general worry and specific fears, (3) perfectionism, control and trauma and (4) social anxiety.

Treatment

Depending on the severity of symptoms, treatment includes a combination of medication and therapy. Therapy that is commonly used includes group and individual therapy.

Additional behaviours of adopt to improve the anxiety include:

- Prioritizing sleep and healthy eating
- Reduce or eliminate the consumption of caffeine
- Reduce or eliminate the use of alcohol and/or tobacco
- Practicing relaxation techniques including:
 - 4-7-8 Breathing
 - Progressive muscle relaxation
 - Visualization
- Ask for help for tasks from family and friends
- Find online or in-person perinatal support groups where you can share with others in the same situation

Resources available

Local Support: MAM MARRAINE AUTOUR DE LA MATERNITE: Perinatal support workers available
2060 Holmes St., St-Hubert, QC J4T 1R8 (450) 904-1458 www.mam.qc.ca.

Psychosocial support available at your local CLSC and through your primary care physician.

CLSC St-Hubert (450) 443-7400

CLSC Brossard (450) 445-4452

CLSC St-Jean-sur-Richelieu (450) 358-2572

CLSC Richelieu (450) 658-7561

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