



## Information Sheet: Postnatal Depression (PND)

### What is Postnatal Depression (PND)?

Many women experience what is known as the 'baby blues' – feeling weepy and sad – often on about day four after giving birth, when the 'happy hormones' go and the prolactin kicks in for real milk production. For most women these blues last only a few days, but some find that the depression stays, or returns, and gets worse.

It's hard to know where baby blues end and postnatal depression begins: figures for new mothers experiencing PND range from one in ten to more than one in two new mothers. Recently, there has been some research into PND in the partners of new mothers, with early findings suggesting that it could affect some men in the same way.

No one really knows what causes PND. It is suspected it is a mixture of hormonal imbalance and a genetic predisposition to depression. Environmental factors can also come into play – if you have had a stressful pregnancy or birth or have a lack of support at home. The "usual" stresses of early motherhood – trouble breast feeding, exhaustion – can be the last straw.

### Symptoms of PND:

Symptoms are very similar to "ordinary" depression: feeling tearful or sad for no particular reason, finding it hard to sleep even when your baby allows this, eating more or less than usual, being irritable with your partner or baby, and feeling generally unable to cope. Sufferers often feel very anxious about the baby and be convinced something terrible is going to happen.

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PND can take two forms. One type occurs when the postnatal “blues”, which started soon after the baby’s birth, become worse and more distressing as time passes. The second develops more slowly and is not noticeable until several weeks after the birth.

### **Treatment:**

Speak to your health visitor or GP. They can help you access support groups, refer you for counseling. You could perhaps be prescribed anti-depressants - a group of anti-depressants called SSRIs, including Serotax or Cipramil have proven to be very effective. It is important to realise that it is not your fault, you are not a bad mother and you are not harming your baby. PND is not a weakness but an illness that always gets better.

### **How CCL can help:**

We offer a free brief counselling (six sessions) to people, aged 16 and over, living in Ryedale and, where appropriate, in Scarborough who are referred by their doctor or another NHS worker. We work with a wide range of presenting issues, including PND.

### **Other sources of information:**

Websites: [www.apni.org.uk](http://www.apni.org.uk); [www.mama.co.uk](http://www.mama.co.uk)

Self-help books: ‘Feelings After Birth: The NCT Book of Postnatal Depression’ by Heather Welford. For your partner: ‘My Journey to Her World’ by Michael Lurie.

‘Surviving Postnatal Depression: At Home, No one Can Hear You Scream’ Cara Aiken.