

Engelska



”I should actually be overjoyed”
– when expectant parents feel down

BECOMING PARENTS

This brochure tells about the emotional changes that you as a parent can experience after having a baby. It can help to have information about these changes beforehand. If you get depressed, you and your family will have an idea of what's going on and where you can get help.

Becoming a parent is a big change. In our society there are many perceptions surrounding parenthood; it will work out by itself, be natural and you should automatically know what to do. Most are prepared that they may lose a lot of sleep the first time as a new parent, but you will definitely be happy. Always happy ... Or?

The two most common emotional problems that occur after childbirth are having the "blues" and depression.

WHAT IS HAVING THE "BLUES"?

More than half of all mothers go through a period of mild crying shortly after giving birth. One can be more sensitive and start crying for no particular reason. This is fully normal and harmless, and usually lasts a few days.

"One moment I feel so close and the next I barely feel anything and then when the guilt sets in which makes me feel completely worthless. Then I just sit and cry. Sometimes everything feels hopeless."

"I had a lot of expectations about how cosy and harmonious everything would be ... And then everything just fell apart..."

"...I had such expectations of me being strong and stable, but instead I just felt afraid..."

WHAT IS DEPRESSION AFTER CHILDBIRTH?

Often the first time with the child is a happy time, but for many this period also feels difficult and cumbersome. In the first six to eight weeks after the baby is born, it is common for things to feel upside down, it is common to be close to tears and to feel extra sensitive. There can be a number of reasons. One reason may be that the tension you have felt before the birth is now released, another may be the hormones being released in your body during childbirth and breastfeeding. Other contributing factors may be that the child screams a lot and that you as a parent get too little sleep, that the birth has been cumbersome or that you have few loved ones around you to whom you can ask for support and help. The feeling of being responsible for another person's life can feel overwhelming for many. Or as a parent articulates it; "I am a person who takes a lot of responsibility, and the responsibility as a parent became too much for me. I had such great expectations for me to be strong and stable, but instead I just felt afraid".

For most, the worry and sadness will pass after a while, one finds routines which work and soon you feel at home in your role of parent. For others, the depression may remain. Nowadays, persistent postpartum depression is known to affect as many as 10-15 percent of new mothers. New fathers/non-parents can also feel down, although it's not quite as common. Person who earlier in life, in close connection with pregnancy or during pregnancy, has been depressed also have a higher risk of feeling worse after childbirth.

What are the signs that you have postpartum depression? Common signs are:

- Depression, sadness
- Fatigue, indifference
- Worry, anxiety
- Irritation, difficulty concentrating
- Lack of warmer feelings (for partner, children and/or siblings)
- Feelings of guilt
- Loss of appetite, sleep disorders.



WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION?

You can help yourself by resting properly and making sure you are getting enough sleep. Accept help from your partner and/or others around you. Try to eat properly. The right kind of food, promenades and doing things you know makes you feel good can help.

It can be difficult to talk to someone about yourself or your partner feeling this way, precisely because many of us are not used to showing others when we are having a hard time. This can be especially difficult when we have just had a baby – then one “should” be overjoyed! But often that is exactly what helps – talking to someone. And the faster you get help, the faster you can start to feel better.

If you feel down or worried, talk to your midwife, the nurse at BVC or other healthcare staff who can give you support. At BVC, we know that many new parents feel down and are attentive to how new parents feel. In order to more easily find the parents who are depressed, a special form has been developed that new mothers can fill in, a so-called EPDS form. Fathers/non-parents are also invited to a personal visit to BVC, where the non-parent are asked questions about their well-being and how the transition to becoming a parent is experienced. Your nurse at BVC can provide support and, if necessary, can put you in touch with a counsellor, psychologist and/or physician in maternal care and children’s healthcare or the health centre.