

## WHEN IT'S MORE THAN THE BLUES

Public health nurses across B.C. now offer screening for perinatal depression to all mothers (birth, adoptive or step) by eight weeks postpartum. This includes education and intervention, referrals, and a plan for follow-up as needed.

The screening uses the Edinburg Postpartum Depression Scale (EPDS) questionnaire, a universally recognized screening tool.

Untreated perinatal depression can impact a woman's relationships as well as the social and emotional development of her child (ren). Postpartum blues (or baby blues) may be experienced by up to 50-80 per cent of women after birth; symptoms usually subside within two weeks. Perinatal depression can occur anytime in pregnancy and up to one year after birth. It is experienced by up to 16 per cent of women in the perinatal period, and perinatal anxiety is experienced by up to eight per cent of women during pregnancy or postpartum. Perinatal depression and anxiety often co-exist and may affect as many as one in five women in B.C.

Effective treatment is available. Accessing help early on can reduce how severe and how long postpartum depression and anxiety lasts, and the impacts on the woman and her family.

Symptoms can range from mild blues to total despair. They include:

- Feeling sad, anxious or crying a lot
- Feeling guilty, worthless or hopeless
- Finding it hard to focus or concentrate
- Feeling like you have no energy
- Not wanting to be with your family or friends
- Not enjoying life like you did before
- Not enjoying time with your baby
- Having panic attacks, excessive worrying, obsessive or scary thoughts
- Feeling inadequate or resentful towards the baby
- Feeling more angry or irritable than usual

Self-care is important for all women during pregnancy and in the postpartum time period, and can help protect against postpartum depression, anxiety, and relapse.

Suggestions to take care of yourself include:

- Be kind to yourself
- Find someone to talk to
- Ask for help from your family and friends
- Try to get as much sleep as you need, including naps
- Choose healthy foods like fresh fruits & vegetables, lean meats (and other protein foods such as cheese and tofu), low fat dairy products, and whole wheat bread and try to eat regularly
- Try your best to find time to exercise
- Find time for you to relax – even if it is just for a few minutes to put your feet up or go outside for some fresh air

For more information visit the Baby blues, Depression, and Anxiety web page at [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca).

**AUTHOR: JOANNE SMREK, REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE COORDINATOR, MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH—POPULATION HEALTH**