

Often mothers feel a lot of shame to be seen as not coping, after what should be the most amazing and important event in a women's life. This pamphlet is written to give hope and forward direction for return to health and emotional equilibrium.

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER, after childbirth.

(Events Related)

aka: Shell Shock. (Psychological term for a set of reactions anyone may experience when something traumatic, scary or bad happens, involving death or injury to self or others, including. baby.)

Risk Factors:

Previous trauma, rape, or sexual abuse.

Mother has become traumatised during the childbirth procedures due to pain, perceived threat to herself or her baby's/ies' well being.

Actions of health professionals etc.

Distinctions:

Events related. It is the ONLY mental illness listed in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Illnesses as an 'environmentally' or 'externally' caused mental illness.

Affects up to 7% of mothers.

Often misdiagnosed as PND.

Symptoms occur in first few weeks or not for months or years. Significant changes in personality and behaviour.

Unresolved trauma will also result in depression.

Symptoms:

Significant change in personality.
Flashbacks of the events - vivid & sudden memories. Nightmares of the events.
Exaggerated startle response - constantly living on edge.

Hyper arousal - always jumpy, living in a continual state of fight or flight, always 'on guard'.

Hyper vigilant - constantly looking around them, looking for trouble/stressors, eg will ensure that they have a seat by the door so that they can control their environment.

Avoidance - attempts to avoid all reminders of the traumatic event, eg refuse to talk about it, avoid other mothers, pregnant women etc.

Concentration is affected.

Avoidance of close emotional ties.

Physiological reactivity on exposure to events that resemble an aspect of the event, panic attacks, sweating or palpitations.

Anger issues.

Loss of hope for the future.

Psychic numbing - mother shuts down, so much, that cannot feel a thing emotionally.

Depression Symptoms: as per Post Natal Depression list.

Self Help Measures:

Find one or two trusted people to TALK, TALK, TALK about the trauma.

Find your own safe place.

Accept that your feelings are a normal reaction to traumatic events.

Create own support network. Trauma And Birth Stress Support Group. (Refer also to self-help measures for Post Natal Depression (PND).)

Professional Help:

Medication, homeopathic remedies.

Counselling.

Eye Movement De-sensitisation Reprocessing Therapy,

Family Therapy.

Psychotherapy. Maternal Mental Health Team.

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POST NATAL DEPRESSION (Mood Related)

aka: Depression

Risk Factors:

Maternity blues. Previous depression or mental health problem.

Difficult relationships, especially with father of the baby or with own mother. Pre-natal anxiety, low self esteem,

Depression during pregnancy.

Life stressors (financial, housing), lack of social support.

Complicated birth or a birth that was different from expectation.

Brain damaged or ill or fussy baby. When bonding has not happened.

Mother deprived of sleep.

Distinctions:

Related to the mother's mood.

10-15% of mothers.

Occurs within the first few months of birth.

With treatment 70-80% will fully recover, 20-30% will improve but will have some symptoms that last another 6 months. 10% will remain unwell for 2+ years.

Symptoms:

Persistent weepiness, irritability, irrationality.

Loss of appetite. Tiredness, sleep disturbance.

Withdrawal. Feelings of intense fear – dread.

Lack of bonding with baby. intense anger, loss of confidence, loss of concentration. Inappropriate thoughts.

Out of character behaviour, from quiet to 'over the top'.

Anxiety, insecurity, loss of normal self. Guilt, contemplating harming one's self.

Self Help Measures:

Good Vitamin levels - B9 and B12.
Good diet of protein and carbohydrates.

Evening primrose oil.

Low intake of salt, alcohol and smoking. Agree that help is needed.

Active care and support for the next pregnancy. Plunket Family Centres. Post Natal Support Groups.

Exercise.

Professional Help:

Medication, Homeopathic Remedies. Pregnancy Help Groups, Post Natal Depression Support Group, Counselling Services, Plunket Family Services, Maternal Mental Health Team.

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Note from TABS:

TABS is NOT a health provider, but is an organisation of mothers educating and supporting mothers. This brochure is written in order to make clear the distinct symptoms of PTSD and thus written in good faith..

For more information go to the TABS – Trauma And Birth Stress Website

www.tabs.org.nz

Or write to TABS – PO Box 18 002 Glen Innes, Auckland, New Zealand.

Or make contact with the people involved in your birth experience asking them to point your in the direction of people able to help in your local area.

***“Birth -
It
wasn't
supposed
to be
like
this...”***



TABS ~ Trauma And Birth Stress