Postpartum depression is a serious but highly treatable condition which may affect up to 20% of women in the year after giving birth. This is higher than the 9.5% estimate by the National Institute for Mental Health for prevalence rates of mood disorders for all adults in the U.S. Unlike the “baby blues” symptoms of postpartum depression persist for 2 weeks or longer.

Women who develop symptoms of depression following the birth of a baby, may be reluctant to seek treatment due to concerns of being labeled as a bad mother. New mothers may incorrectly misinterpret this as a normal part of motherhood. There is a cultural expectation that the postpartum time should be a time of happiness and joy. When a new mother experiences feelings of sadness, anxiety and irritability, this does not match the expectations. This may form a barrier to help-seeking, since others expect her to be happy. It may be difficult for the woman to reveal her emotional distress to others, who she perceives to be disapproving of her emotional state.
If you think you suffer from postpartum depression, please contact your OBGYN for a referral to the Backus Center for Mental Health. If you are in crisis, go to the closest Emergency Department for evaluation.

**Symptoms of Postpartum Depression**

- Feeling sad or anxious most of the time for 2 weeks or longer
- Inability to sleep, even when the baby is asleep
- Changes in appetite
- Lack of energy
- Feeling overwhelmed and irritable
- Being unable to enjoy things
- Crying easily
- Thoughts of harming herself or the baby

**Risk Factors for Postpartum Depression**

- Genetic predisposition
- Multiple births
- Lack of support at home
- Relationship stress
- Pregnancy or delivery complications

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