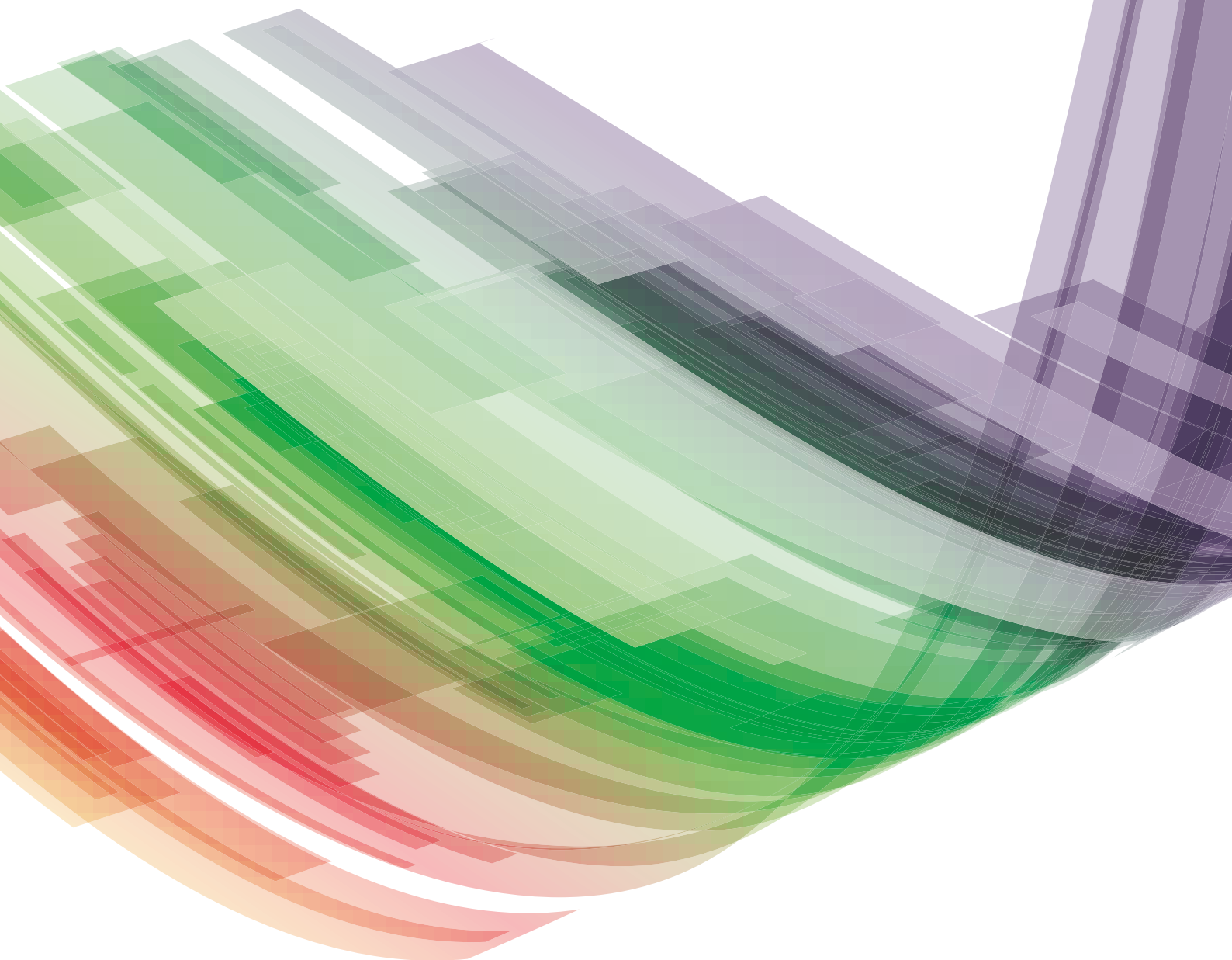




Bedfordshire, Luton  
and Milton Keynes  
Integrated Care Board

# Postnatal Depression



A self help guide

**A member of staff or a carer can support you to read this booklet. They will be able to answer any questions that you have.**

## About this leaflet

- This leaflet is for people who think they might have post natal depression.
- This leaflet will tell you what post natal depression is.
- It will tell you where you can go to get help.

## What is post natal depression?



Post natal depression is a type of depression that some women get after they have had a baby.

Sometimes it starts while you are still pregnant, but it is only called post natal depression if you are still depressed after you have given birth.

Post natal depression happens to lots of women.

## What makes post natal depression different?



The way you feel when you have post natal depression is the same as any sort of depression – feeling low and not interested in things that you usually like doing.

The only difference is that you might start to feel like this in the first few months after having a baby.

Most women have different feelings after they have had a baby.



Lots of women get 'baby blues'. This is a type of depression that can make new mothers burst into tears, feel nervous, tired and stressed.

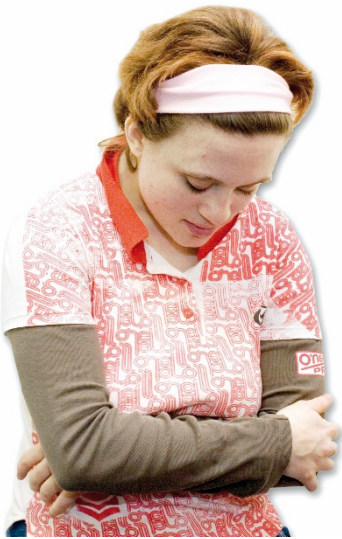
Another problem that women might have is called Puerperal Psychosis – not many women get this. It means that a new mother might have very different behaviour after having a baby, they might:

- feel very moody and angry
- feel very confused and upset
- have unusual and upsetting thoughts



Any new mother who is feeling like this **must** ask for help from their doctor straight away.

## How might post natal depression make me feel?



Post natal depression is different for everyone. Some women who have post natal depression say they feel:

- sad, upset, crying lots or not crying at all
- guilty
- not interested in anything
- nervous, scared or panicky
- angry and irritable
- not close to their baby
- they have no energy and are tired all of the time
- not able to sleep



Lots of women are embarrassed about feeling like this when they have had a baby.

It is important to realise that you are not alone and people can help you. You should speak to your doctor, nurse or midwife as soon as you can.

## Who gets post natal depression?



Anyone who has given birth can get post natal depression. Some people might be more likely to get it, if:

- you have had depression before
- having a baby was very hard or frightening for you
- you are having problems with a relationship
- you don't have friends or family around to help you
- you are having other problems in your life



Having a baby means lots of changes happening in your life. Doctors think that post natal depression is caused by these changes happening all at once.

Your body changes and the hormones in your body are all different after having a baby.



Having a baby is very hard work – it makes you tired and you might not be able to get as much sleep as you would like. You might also be in pain if you had to have an operation to have your baby.





Having a baby can change the relationships you have with people. You might not see family or friends as much. You might argue with your partner more.

All of these things can mean that you might start to feel depressed and upset.

## What can I do to help?



If you think you are suffering from post natal depression, you should talk to your doctor, nurse or midwife as soon as possible.



They might give you some tablets to take called anti-depressants. These usually make you feel better but can take a couple of weeks to start working.



Your doctor or nurse might ask you to see someone else who will be able to help you.

Talking about how you are feeling is very important. Try not to spend too much time on your own everyday. Being around other people can help to feel in a better mood.



If people offer to help you – take it. You should not feel guilty if you need to ask for help – remember – having a baby is hard work!



Try to find some time for yourself. Take a long bath, make yourself feel nice, do some exercise or go for a walk. These things can all help you feel less stressed.

## **What if I am too depressed to do these things?**

Sometimes you might feel so low, that you can't be bothered to do anything to help.



You could try making a plan for each day – setting out what you are going to do and when. This will help you see that you can do things and show you what you have achieved.



You could write or draw the things that have happened to you each day. Think about which things made you feel good about yourself and which things gave you a sense of achievement.





Try not to think bad thoughts about yourself. If you do, try to change the thought into a good one, for example, you might think 'I'm a useless mother'.

Change this into, 'my midwife thinks I am doing really well'.



When you are depressed, small problems can end up feeling really big. It is important to try and think about the steps you need to take to fix the problem.

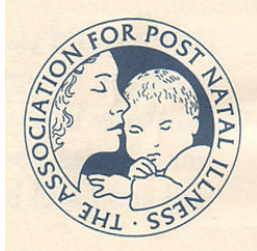
Breaking the problem down into smaller steps, will help you to see what you need to do to make things better.



Remember, if you have thought about hurting yourself or anyone else you should speak to your doctor, nurse or midwife straight away.

## Where to get more help

If you would like to get more help or information, you can get in touch with these people:



### **Association for Post Natal Illness**

For women suffering from depression after giving birth.

Telephone: 0207 386 0868

Email: [info@apni.org](mailto:info@apni.org)

[www.apni.org](http://www.apni.org)



### **Home-Start**

Help and support for families struggling to cope.

Telephone: 0800 068 6368

Email: [info@home-start.org.uk](mailto:info@home-start.org.uk)

[www.home-start.org.uk](http://www.home-start.org.uk)



### **Rethink**

Information and help for anyone who has mental health problems.

Telephone: 0300 500 0927

Email: [info@rethink.org](mailto:info@rethink.org)

[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)



You can also get help and information from your doctor or nurse.

Easy Read version developed by:

- Skills for People, Telephone: 0191 281 8737  
Skills for People is a registered charity no. 1069993



- Many thanks to service users and healthcare staff who have contributed to the development of this guide.

Adapted from Postnatal Depression - A Self Help Guide  
written by Dr Lesley Maunder and Lorna Cameron  
[www.cntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp)

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