

**Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)  
National Child and Maternal Health Education Program (NCMHEP)**

**Understanding Perceptions of Postpartum Depression  
To Inform Educational Outreach Efforts**

**Messages for Focus Group with Mothers**

**Message #1: Many moms often feel changes in mood after birth.**

- Any woman can suffer from mood swings after the birth of a child.
- There is no shame in feeling depressed or anxious after the birth of a child.
- Hormones, genetics, and brain chemistry all play major roles in the onset of these mood swings after the birth of a child.
- Approximately 70% to 80% of all new mothers experience some negative feelings or mood swings after the birth of their child.

**Message #2: Postpartum depression is not just “feeling moody” or overwhelmed shortly after birth.**

- If these feelings have gone on for a long time and they have interfered with your daily activities, speak with a health care professional.
- It might be hard to recognize depression or anxiety when you are tired, overwhelmed, or adjusting to life with a new baby.
- It is important to talk to your partner, family, friends, or health care provider if you don't feel like yourself.
- Symptoms can start anytime in the first year postpartum.
- Symptoms may include feelings of anger, lack of interest in the baby, loss of interest in things you used to enjoy, being unable to care for your baby or yourself, and thoughts of harming yourself or the baby.
- These symptoms may be signs of postpartum depression.
- A family history of depression or anxiety, family stress, complications in the pregnancy or birth, or a multiple birth can all increase the risk of postpartum depression.

**Message #3: If you suffer from postpartum depression, you are not alone.**

- There is no shame in feeling depressed or anxious after the birth of a child.
- Unexpected life circumstances can affect a mom's mental health after the birth of a child.
- Over half a million women a year suffer from postpartum depression.
- Having a baby is a major life change and transition. Big changes can cause significant stress and may lead to depression.
- Postpartum depression may make you feel isolated, like you are the only one in the world who has this experience. Hearing other women's stories in a support group or from a support organization can provide hope for recovery.
- Your health provider can provide a list of resources and support groups in your community.
- 10% to 15% of women experience significant symptoms of depression or anxiety after the birth of a child.

**Message #4: Postpartum depression can be treated.**

- Getting treatment is important for you and your family.
- With proper care, you can fully recover.
- Without treatment, the depression and all of its symptoms will get worse and may put you and your family in danger.
- Your health care professional may ask you a set of questions to decide on the best treatment for you.
- Some women find a support group helpful in coping with postpartum depression.
- There are many treatment options for postpartum depression. Some women may participate in therapy and some women may require medication.