



Photo:kootation.com

# When having a baby makes you sad.

When Josephine had her new baby girl, everybody expected her to be over the moon with joy. She was in a stable relationship with a man who supported her and her new-born and she finally had her long-awaited baby girl. She therefore was completely surprised when she did not love and bond with her baby as she expected. Instead, she was embarrassed that she did not feel to take care of her baby or of herself. She became quite sad and she withdrew from social and family activities. She started realising that people thought she was a bad mother and this filled her with hopelessness. Try as she may, Josephine could not think what would make her feel better or different. What was wrong with her?

Having a baby usually is a joyous experience for most new mothers. However, there are some women, like Josephine, to whom this does not apply. A relatively small number of new mothers might feel depressed, irritated and weepy shortly after having a baby. Many of the women who are experiencing these conditions might be overwhelmed for not "loving" their babies. These women in all likelihood are suffering from a condition known as postpartum depression. In Africa postpartum depression depression is often misunderstood and women who suffer from it are stigmatised as "bad mothers."

Postpartum depression is not the same as the "baby blues" which affect many women in the first couple of weeks after

the birth of their baby. Postpartum depression is a serious condition which may last some months after childbirth. Women who are affected by this condition usually feel depressed and they may act strangely, see or hear things that are not there and in some (severe) cases might be a danger to herself and her baby. It is therefore important for women who feel this way to get professional help very urgently.

Postpartum depression could be brought on by a number of factors, including the changes in hormones after the pregnancy. It can occur after a child birth, a still birth or a miscarriage. There seems to be a link between postpartum depression and poor support from the family, partner and friends. Stress also seem to play a role. Signs of postpartum depression include;

- Feeling very sad, hopeless, and empty. Some women also may feel anxious.
- Losing pleasure in everyday things.
- Not feel hungry and may lose weight. (But some women feel more hungry and gain weight).
- Having trouble sleeping.
- Not being able to concentrate.

These symptoms can occur in the first day or two after the birth, or they can follow the symptoms of the baby blues after a couple of weeks.

It is very important that the woman

affected by postpartum depression inform her nurse or doctor about her feelings. It is also important for family and friends to realise that the woman is not a "bad" mother; but that she has a condition that can and should be treated urgently and that the affected woman needs extra support from them

When Josephine's partner realised that she was depressed and not bonding with her baby, he insisted on accompanying her to her first check up and that she tell her doctor about her feelings. Her doctor then put her on anti-depressant medicines and send her to a counsellor.

Her family also started to support her more by taking care of the baby when Josephine felt that she could not do it. One year after her baby is born, Josephine finally is beginning to feel better about herself and she is bonding well with her beautiful baby.

For more information:  
<http://www.timeslive.co.za/lifestyle/family/2012/12/31/recognising-and-coping-with-postpartum-depression>  
<http://www.webmd.com/depression/postpartum-depression/postpartum-depression-topic-overview>