

POSTPARTUM PSYCHOSIS

Information for Providers



WHAT IS POSTPARTUM PSYCHOSIS?

PP is a severe postpartum disorder that often starts in the first few days or weeks after delivery as depression, mania, or a mixture of the two before progressing to psychosis. Symptoms can vary widely and change very rapidly, even over the course of hours. Rarely, the symptoms start later than a few weeks after childbirth. It is important to distinguish between PP and the “baby blues” or postpartum anxiety; postpartum psychosis is a medical emergency and should be treated as such.

RISK FACTORS

- History of postpartum psychosis, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or schizoaffective disorder
- Family history of bipolar disorder
- Discontinuation of psychiatric medications during pregnancy
- Excessive sleep deprivation in early postpartum

PAY ATTENTION

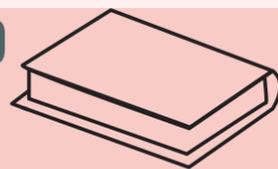
Patients often appear put together and underreport their symptoms for fear of losing their baby. Ask about intrusive thoughts, feeling worried/paranoid, not letting anyone else see/hold baby, feeling a need to stay awake all night to watch over baby, hearing whispers, seeing shadows, etc.

SLEEP



It is paramount that the patient has long and uninterrupted sleep. Make an effort to minimize night-time interruptions, and if possible, encourage use of an outpatient night nurse.

REFER PATIENTS TO RESOURCES



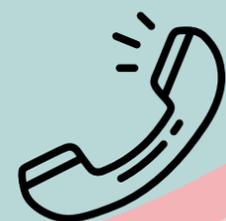
Our website has a number of resources for postpartum psychosis survivors, including resources for loved ones. Encourage them to visit MGHP3.org/resources.

BREASTFEEDING

For many women, being told that they will have to stop breastfeeding can be a difficult hurdle; if she wishes and is able to continue, try to find effective medications that are safe for breastfeeding. If the mom is hospitalized, make sure she has access to a pump; many psychiatric floors do not have breast pumps. One should also weigh the potential benefits of breastfeeding against the risk of sleep disruption. For more information on which medications are safe to breastfeed on, please submit a consultation request form or review the research shared on womensmentalhealth.org

REQUEST A CONSULT

If you are looking for specific recommendations on the treatment or prevention of postpartum psychosis, please fill out a consultation request on our website. An expert will provide a free consultation for any provider (physician, nurse, therapist, etc.) and return your call in 1-2 business days. Visit MGHP3.org/consult-line



The Postpartum

Psychosis Project

at Massachusetts General Hospital

Find resources, research, and more at MGHP3.org or call (617)-643-7205

 in partnership with Postpartum Support International

If this is a psychiatric emergency, please call 911 and send the patient to the nearest emergency room.