

## Postnatal Depression – do you think you're suffering?

**Approximately 20% of women will suffer from postnatal depression. It is common, it is possible to diagnose and it is treatable. Dr Vanessa Keleher talks about symptoms and where to go for help.**

Whilst motherhood is often glorified as a time of immense happiness & fulfillment, for a significant proportion of women their experience is clouded by less rosy emotions. Up to 20% of women will suffer from postpartum depression following the birth of their baby. Often the onset is insidious and many women describe it as being initially difficult to distinguish from the general feelings of tiredness that most new mother's experience. It is important to recognise and correctly diagnose postnatal depression, as untreated depression can have negative effects for the mother, her baby and family. The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Screening (EPDS) tool is commonly used in Singapore by Obstetricians, midwives and GPs to screen for depressive symptoms – it is a self-rated questionnaire that can be administered during pregnancy and after delivery.

Symptoms of depression may include feelings of sadness, emptiness or a feeling of detached emotions, difficulty in experiencing pleasure, decreased sense of enjoyment, decreased motivation, and a sense of guilt or loss of hope. Some women report poor concentration and slowed thinking. A small minority of depressed mothers may also experience suicidal or infanticidal thoughts. Anxiety symptoms may become more prominent when a mother is depressed.

If you are concerned that you may be suffering from postnatal depression it is important to seek help early, either by speaking with your GP, obstetrician or healthcare provider. Specialist psychiatric services are also widely available and you do not need a referral to see a psychiatrist in Singapore. The Women's Emotional Health Service at National University Hospital (NUH) has psychiatrists with specialist experience working in Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and The Netherlands. [www.nuh.com.sg/psymed\\_wehs.html](http://www.nuh.com.sg/psymed_wehs.html) (67722037). Depression is a treatable illness and there are a number of treatment options available, including both pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapies.  
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