

How do you know if you have postpartum depression?

Feeling blue for several days after giving birth is normal. Yet about 10 percent of women develop postpartum depression, a state of intense feelings of sadness, anxiety and despair that last well past the average baby blues.

“If it lasts longer than two weeks, it’s too long,” said Dr. Mary Jo Johnson, chief of obstetrics at the Perinatal Center at St. Joseph Medical Center, Towson. One of the questions she asks her patients during post-birth, six-week check-ups is how their moods have been. “Are you crying every day? If yes, that’s not OK.”

Mothers with a history of depression – outside or inside pregnancy – are usually at higher risk. “That group we will particularly target,” said Dr. Johnson. “We tell them, ‘You need to watch this,’ and ask the husband or partner to keep an eye on her.”

The upswing is that doctors now believe postpartum depression is a treatable chemical imbalance, said Dr. Johnson. “The good news to tell mothers is that they won’t have it the rest of their lives.”

The Perinatal Center provided information from The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists on postpartum depression: its signs, probable causes and remedies. Here’s a partial list:

Signs of postpartum depression:

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