

Suffering in Silence

“Male Postpartum depression”



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Postnatal/Postpartum depression is an episode of the major depressive disorder occurring after birth. It sets in within the first four weeks and lasts for almost a year. It includes feeling persistently apathetic, or even suicidal and is well studied in women.

It's estimated that 10% of fathers, around 1 in 4 fathers experience depressive symptoms soon after birth. But this is not a well-studied phenomenon in men. It can be due to various factors like

- Poor help-seeking among men
- Feelings of embarrassment about being a father with depression
- Stigma

Fathers with PND are likely to engage in escapist behaviour like working for longer hours. They tend to be indecisive, and self-critical, have difficulty bonding with their baby, lack interest in the world, feel helpless and fearful about the future and are more likely to abuse alcohol or substances.

PND in women is known to be associated with the hormone changes that occur after birth. This may be the case in men too. Some research suggests that postnatal depression occurs due to the decreasing testosterone in men during their partner's pregnancy and the increasing oestrogen levels towards the end of pregnancy.

The men, who are more prone to develop, have the following risk factors:

- Their partner is suffering from PND
- Lack of job stability
- Poor relationship satisfaction
- Lack of social support
- Sleep deprivation

- Are not in a relationship with the child's mother
- Have unrealistic expectations of fatherhood.
- Have drug misuse problems

Research has found that if a child's father has PND, the child was more likely to have behaviour difficulties and poor development.

So it is necessary to diagnose it earlier. This can be done by prioritizing non-birthing parents' mental health along with the mothers from the start. Better parental leave changed workplace culture can also contribute. Usually, Cognitive behavioural therapy and antidepressants form the basis of treatment.

References:

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