



Postnatal illness and anxiety

Pandas Foundation

Pre And post Natal Depression Advice and Support

About Us

Pandas Foundation (Pre And postNatal Depression Advice and Support) has been set up to support individuals and their families who are living with Pre and Postnatal Depression.

Our primary focus is that no parent should feel alone when suffering depression, whether it is during pregnancy or following birth.

We aim to understand the individual behind the illness and give them the advice, guidance and support they need to help aid their recovery.

Pandas Foundation offers a variety of support services; website and online community, telephone help line, email and local support groups.

Why we are here

In the UK:

- 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year
- A number of studies indicate that 10-15 per cent of new mothers will experience Postnatal Depression
- Close to 90 per cent of those who die by suicide have a mental disorder. Of these suicides more than 60 per cent are thought to have been experiencing a depressive illness at the time

About anxiety

Anxiety is part of normal human experience and is a reaction to situations which we find stressful, fearful or dangerous. It is sometimes known as the fight or flight response. It is simply your body preparing for action either to fight danger or run away from it as fast as possible.

Anxiety becomes abnormal when it is severe or inappropriate without adequate cause and lasting a long time.

Anxiety disorders are common. Around 1 in 10 people experience anxiety disorders at some point during their lives

Symptoms of anxiety

Anxiety can affect us in at least four different ways

How you feel

- Anxious, nervous, worried, frightened
- Feeling something dreadful is going to happen
- Tense, stressed, uptight, on edge, unsettled
- Unreal, strange, woozy, detached
- Panicky

How you think

- Constant worrying
- Can't concentrate
- Thoughts racing
- Mind jumping from one thing to another
- Imagining the worst and dwelling on it

What you might do

- Pace up and down
- Start jobs and not finish them
- Can't sit and relax
- On the go all of the time
- Talk quickly or more than usual
- Snappy and irritable behaviour
- Drinking more
- Smoke more
- Eat more or less

What happens to your body

- A rapid pulse
- Teeth grinding
- Restlessness
- Breathlessness
- Sweating
- Light-headedness
- Diarrhea
- Flushing
- A lump in the throat
- Feeling of tightness in the chest
- Muscle tension
- Trembling
- Getting tired easily
- Dry mouth
- Nausea
- Abdominal colic
- Frequent urination
- Weakness
- Loss of appetite
- Headache

Common thoughts

- I'm losing control
- I'm cracking up
- I'm going to faint
- I'm going to have a heart attack
- I'm going to make a fool of myself
- I can't cope
- I've got to get out

Physical causes of anxiety

There may be many reasons why someone becomes anxious. It is very common to see someone with pre or postnatal depression experience feeling anxious.

- Some people may have an anxious personality
- Others may have a series of stressful life events to cope with, which can be birth of son/daughter
- Others may be under pressure at work or home, for example family problems or being able to pay bills on time.



Treatment

There are a few different approaches to helping people with anxiety

- Talking therapies
- Medicines
- Self help

Talking therapies

The common therapy used by the NHS is Cognitive behavioural therapy or CBT please see our website for more information www.pandasfoundation.org.uk

Medicines for helping with anxiety

The two main types of medicines are;

- Benzodiazepines (diazepam and lorazepam)
- Antidepressants (paroxetine and sertraline)

Self help

Controlled Breathing

Over breathing is very common when someone becomes anxious. Try to recognise if you are doing this and slow your breathing down. Getting into a regular rhythm of in two three and out two three will soon return your breathing to normal. Some people find it helpful to breath into a paper bag or by cupping your hands to help your breathing.

Distraction

If you take your mind off your symptoms they often disappear. Try to look around you and look at them in detail for example registration numbers, what sort of shoes people are wearing. Try to do this for at least three minutes before symptoms will begin to reduce.

Avoidance

Once a vicious circle has developed, lots of anxious thoughts increase the anxiety symptoms. Trying to avoid places or situations that will make you feel anxious can be very inconvenient and difficult. This sort of avoidance can result in a great loss of confidence. But building up the tolerance in small steps will help overcome avoidance altogether.

Support available

Pandas Foundation offer a variety of support mechanisms including;



- Email Support - info@pandasfoundation.org.uk



- Website - www.pandasfoundation.org.uk



- Pandas Support Groups - Find your local group by visiting our website

Pandas Help Line

0843 28 98 401

Phone lines are open 9am till 8pm. Mon - Sun

Knowing where to find answers to your questions, or having someone outside the family to talk to who has experienced similar situations, can often make a real difference to life with pre or postnatal depression.

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