

Is Postpartum Depression Equivalent to Clinical Depression?

Nancy Lins, ND

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The diagnosis of Postpartum Depression (PPD) is too narrow for most women's

experience. Many women will simply not feel the same since they gave birth, but it is difficult to characterize their experience. They do not consider themselves to be depressed necessarily and they are functional.

The fact is, women who suffer from Postpartum Mood Disorders (PPMD) may not feel depressed at all! PPMD can take on many different faces which may or may not include depression.

To contrast, here are some of the common signs of clinical depression:

- Constant sad, down or “empty” mood
- Losing interest or pleasure in activities you once enjoyed
- Excessive crying
- Feeling guilty, lonely, worthless, or hopeless
- Sleeping too much
- Increased appetite, overeating and weight gain
- Decreased energy, feeling exhausted
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment

These symptoms may or may not exist along with these unexpected signs of PPMD:

- Anxiety and restlessness
- Obsessive/Compulsive thoughts or behaviors
- Unable to sleep, either can't fall asleep or can't stay asleep

- Unable to eat, loss of appetite, weight loss
- Scary and violent thoughts
- Restlessness and irritability
- Feeling tired and wired
- Loss of sex drive and regular menstrual cycle
- Not quite feeling the same since giving birth

How can I treat PPMD?

Oftentimes, PPMD comes from an imbalance of one or more of these types:

- Nutritional
- Hormonal
- Biochemical

When it comes to treating imbalance in the body using naturopathic medicine, we always want to look for the cause of the imbalance, and then treat the imbalance itself. But some doctors will simply prescribe a pill to cover up the symptoms a woman currently feels.

For instance, if a woman is having hormonal problems, her doctor may prescribe birth control pills. If she is having biochemical complaints, she is put on a medication, depending on symptoms. If she is having issues with her weight, she is prescribed appetite control or appetite stimulation medications.

Each of these treatments comes along with unwanted side-effects and cannot be carried on indefinitely. But I'm here to tell you that there may be a better way. Here are some examples of naturopathic treatments to these problems.

Hormonal Issues

Since low progesterone levels can cause many of the signs of depression, along with the inability to sleep, a blood test during a woman's period can be invaluable.

The latest literature shows that oral micronized progesterone taken at bedtime or with dinner is a great choice to rebalance progesterone levels. Since it is bio-identical and a prescription medication, insurance will usually cover it. (Note: if you have a peanut allergy, you will need to specially order one made with olive oil.)

Unlike taking synthetic hormone pills, the cycle will be balanced, creating a healthy mood without adversely affecting fertility or increasing risk of blood clots and heart disease — two major side effects of traditional birth control pills.

Biochemical Issues

If a woman is suffering from mood swings, or sleep deprivation, a simple urine and saliva test will show which hormones are out of balance.

As opposed to using prescription medications, which have a variety of different side effects and are very difficult (some might say impossible) to stop using, targeted amino acid therapy uses the building blocks of protein to restore health. Once symptom relief is achieved, a weaning process helps reset the body.

One of my own patients, Nicole, successfully weaned herself off antidepressants. I helped her explore the different options to restore her biochemical levels. You can read about her story in my book, *Baby Blues: A Naturopathic Approach for Postpartum Health*.

Nutrition Issues

It is important to have a personalized nutritional plan. Focus on food and habits.

A good place to begin is with eating a diet that is best for the blood type. More testing may be considered for women with known sensitivities, allergies, and more complicated situations.

There are several different ways to treat the imbalances that lead to postpartum mood disorders. Naturopathic solutions can significantly improve quality of life without the extensive side effects that many traditional medicines cause.

Nancy Lins, ND is an expert in women's health issues pertaining to hormonal imbalances and anti-aging medicine. She is the author of the book *Baby Blues: A Naturopathic Approach for Postpartum Health*. Dr. Lins is a board certified naturopathic physician licensed in the State of Hawaii. She received her doctoral training from Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine and Health Sciences in Tempe, Arizona.

Dr. Lins will speaking at the Annual Restorative Medicine Conference, October 5-8, 2017, in Tucson, Arizona. Her lecture is titled "The Psycho-Neuro-Endocrine-Immunology System (PNEI) of Postpartum Mood Disorder." Based on her personal experiences and extensive clinical successes, Dr. Lins will present hormone, nutrient, and botanical solutions to help women recover from the impact of childbirth, which can linger for more than a decade.

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27 State Street, Suite 5 | Montpelier, VT 05602 | 866-962-2276

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