

[www.pndsupport.co.uk](http://www.pndsupport.co.uk)

**1** in **7**

**women** develop  
**Postnatal Depression**  
following the birth of their  
Child

**You are not  
alone!**



*house of light*  
Counselling for Postnatal Illness



# Baby Blues

This is very common 3-4 days after giving birth. The mother may feel tearful, often for no apparent reason. This is usually due to the fall in hormones after giving birth and will start to improve quickly.

# Postnatal Depression or Postnatal Illness

Postnatal Depression (PND) or as it is also known Postnatal Illness (PNI) affects 1 in 7 mothers, this is regardless of age, religion, ethnic group, etc. It does not matter if it is your first baby or your fourth.

**PND CAN HAPPEN  
ANYTIME IN THE FIRST  
YEAR AFTER GIVING  
BIRTH**



# Who is at risk?

Any Mother can get PND, however you may be at a higher risk if you have previously suffered with depression, or have felt depressed during your pregnancy.

## PND Symptoms

These can be different for everyone but common symptoms can include:

- Tearfulness, weeping frequently
- **Panic attacks and anxiety**
- Being unable to sleep or feeling exhausted even when you have had sleep
- **Nightmares**
- Flashbacks to your labour and birth
- **Worries over cot death**
- Many women describe feeling entrapped or suffocated
- **Worries over everyday objects that could cause harm to yourself or your child, e.g. knives, stairs or even buses/cars**
- Feeling physically ill; chest pains, headaches, dizziness
- **Constant worry over your own health or that of your child/children**
- Not feeling emotion towards your baby
- **Feelings of being overwhelmed**
- Suicidal thoughts and feelings
- **Obsessive thoughts or repetitive chanting thoughts or voices**
- Thoughts you may harm your child or a family member either accidentally or deliberately (most mums with PND **DO NOT** harm their children)
- **Self Harm**
- Feeling numb and lack of emotion
- **Putting on a brave face to hide the way you feel**
- Feeling like a failure a “bad mother”
- **Desire to escape; feeling that your family would be better off without you**

*“Be kind to yourself, ACCEPT help and don’t be afraid to put your hand up and say **“I need some support”**. Most of all - this will pass – you are stronger than you know.”*

*“Be honest with yourself and others. If you are struggling and need help, find the courage and say it.”*

*“Don’t be frightened or ashamed to admit something doesn’t feel right. Don’t struggle alone. Get sleep or rest when possible. Make time to eat and have some you time even if its just a bath or reading a magazine.”*

Quotes are from women who have experienced PND and have sought help or treatment from House of Light

**Call Us: 0800 043 2031**



# Treatment

The earlier PND is spotted and treated the swifter the recovery. For some mothers just admitting how they feel and talking is enough to help, for others anti-depressants are more effective. Professional Counselling can be very beneficial and should be viewed as a positive step.

All mums  
will  
recover  
from PND

## How long does it last?

This varies from mother to mother, but the sooner treatment is received the better. Remember PND is an illness and needs treatment.

## Will it happen again?

Occasionally PND can return after having other children, but you will be able to spot the signs earlier and get help. You can also ensure you have the appropriate help and support in place for after the birth.

Some mums do not experience PND again. Couples contemplating another child need to consider the possibility of the mother going through this illness again, and whether or not this is worth the risk.



# Helping You To Recover

## Rest! Rest! Rest!

We know this can be hard with a baby/children in tow, but please rest even if it is half an hour on the bed or just lying on the sofa. Time out is very important. PND is an illness and as with any illness you need to give yourself time to recover.

## Housework can wait

Dust is a protective covering for furniture! Housework will still be there tomorrow and can wait. Babies and mess go hand in hand, don't worry, it is normal. If you feel that you have to do the housework, do it in moderation. Too much physical exertion can make your symptoms worse.

## Having a bad day? HALT IT!

### H - Hunger

Depression can make you not eat or overeat. Little and often is the key. Not eating can make depression and anxiety worse.

### A - Anger (arguments/ stress)

Anger Try to keep this to a minimum. Look at your current stresses.

### L - Loneliness

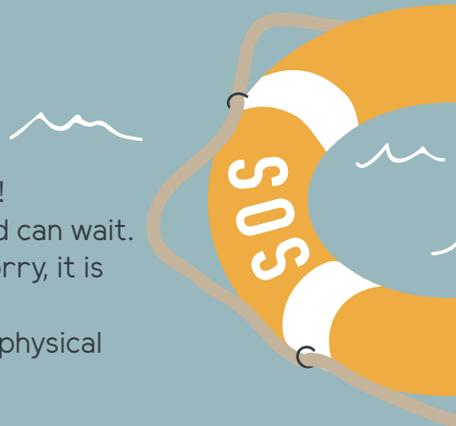
Being on your own for too long with or without your baby - We are mums not machines. Everyone deserves a rest. Adult company can really help

### T - Tiredness

Rest! Rest! Rest! You may also notice that around the time of your period you may experience a drop in your mood, or if you are ill, e.g. infections, flu, etc.

## Accept offers of help

Please do not feel guilty if you need help. Motherhood is not an easy time whether you are ill or not. Take any offer of help no matter how small.



# Do not be scared of medication

If we have a cold/infection/diabetes etc, we take medication, PND is the same - it is an illness. Some mums may not need medication but the majority do and recovery happens faster as a result. Sometimes we just need that helping hand to get us on our way to being well again.

**ANTI DEPRESSANTS ARE NOT ADDICTIVE!**

Please talk to us or your GP or health visitor, if you have any concerns regarding medication.

## One day at a time

Just getting up and facing the day when you are ill with PND is a massive achievement. If you are facing a bad day, remind yourself that you have come through this before and will manage it.

If time is dragging break down the day, take 15 minutes/ half an hour at a time. If you can, find a distraction that is simple and not too physically or mentally draining.

Some mums find it helps to keep a diary to keep a track of good and bad days. This helps to identify any triggers and also to look back and see your progress to date.

Gently increase your activity, in time the more you do, the more you will feel you can do.

## Alcohol

Alcohol can have a depressant effect and make you feel worse. Avoid drinking.

**You can and will recover from PND**

[www.pndsupport.co.uk](http://www.pndsupport.co.uk)



# Anxiety and Panic Attacks

One feature of Postnatal Depression/Illness can be anxiety and panic attacks. ★

Anxiety is a normal human response but when we are under too much emotional or physical stress for too long then our levels of anxiety can rise. Whilst anxiety can feel unpleasant, it is important to remember that it can never harm you.

Panic attacks may cause you to feel that something terrible is about to happen. Some people even question if they are going crazy.

★ Always remember panic and anxiety can never harm you! ★

## Symptoms

Palpitations  
Shaking  
Tingling  
Chest pain  
Agitation  
Restlessness  
Feeling faint  
Sweating  
Numbness ★  
Shortness of breath  
Mind racing  
Nausea/Vomiting  
Dizziness  
Intrusive thoughts  
Increased need to use the toilet

## Tips for Managing Anxiety and Panic Attacks

- Remember anxiety can only reach a certain point, **It will stop!** Anxiety is an emotion and all emotions shift and change.
- Practice a breathing exercise and focus on your breath. If your mind wanders, gently bring back your focus to your breathing.
- Tell yourself, wherever you are is safe and nothing can harm you.
- Don't think about WHAT IF??... stay with WHAT IS.
- Try walking or gentle exercise to burn off adrenaline.
- Don't add more frightening thoughts about what could happen.
- Remind yourself that this will pass.
- Find a gentle distraction.
- Tell yourself that you can handle this and nothing bad will happen.

## Early Recovery



You may doubt your recovery and wonder when you will feel better. You are starting to come through a very difficult time and it is normal to have moments of uncertainty and question your recovery.

In the early days you may notice a shift and the good days start to come through a little more and you begin to focus less on how you feel. There can still be some difficult days and although this can feel frustrating it is a sign recovery is beginning.

**Please be reassured that you can and will get better.**

## Middle Recovery

You may find that your mood may still be up and down however the better days will be starting to increase.

Try not to see bad days as a step back. Be aware of your triggers. Don't be afraid to ask for help or support if you need it; talk about how you feel.

Be gentle with yourself as you continue to heal; try not to put yourself under too much pressure.

## Late Recovery

It is normal to look back and reflect on what has happened. This can leave us with many different feelings and emotions.

It's important to remember that in life we all have ups and downs, times of stress and some sleepless nights. After coming through postnatal illness you may worry that you are going back but remind yourself that this is normal life resuming.

Continue to take good care of yourself and allow yourself some time to do the things that you enjoy and bring you happiness.

email us: [help@pn dsupport.co.uk](mailto:help@pn dsupport.co.uk)

# Support and Advice for Partners and Carers

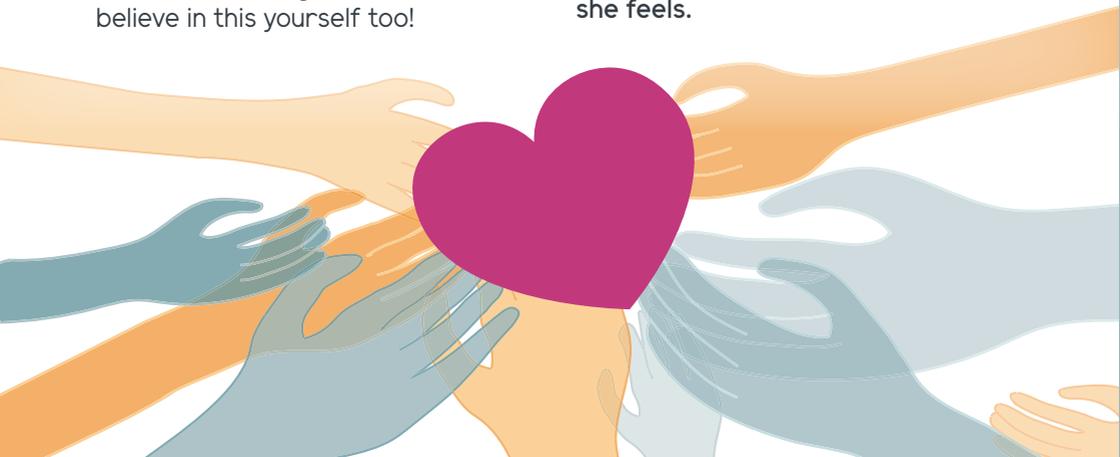
Partners, friends and family can play a vital role in a mother's recovery.

The mother may feel like a burden to others and does not want to feel like this. She may even feel like her baby would be better off without her - this is quite common with PND, but with the right treatment, love and support she will recover and be well again.

## Advice and Tips

- Reassure her of your love and support. This may need to be often but it will help. The mother's confidence may be at rock bottom and she may need lots of reassurance.
- Tell her she will get better and believe in this yourself too!

- Do try to give as much practical help as possible, the illness can make the mother feel extremely tired and even small tasks will take up a lot of energy.
- Spend time on your own as a couple. You are still a couple and not just parents.
- Point out any positives or improvements - no matter how small they may seem. Remind her how well she is doing.
- Avoid arguments - increased stress and tension make the illness worse.
- Encourage your partner to say how she feels. Some mums with PND can have quite alarming thoughts/images in their minds, try not to be shocked. However if you are concerned please mention this to your GP, Midwife, Health Visitor or House of Light. You may think the mother is repeating herself, but it is important for her to express how she feels.



- If you are at work in the day remember your partner is working 24/7 with a baby too! Allow mum some time to herself when you are home, this will help her immensely.

- Partners please note that it is normal for someone who is depressed to lose their sex drive, this will return when she is well. In the meantime offer hugs of support, this will help keep you close and is comforting for you both.

- Do encourage her to see her GP/ Midwife or Health Visitor if she has not done so.

- Do stay with the mother if she is afraid of being alone, this is a temporary phase of the illness it will pass.

- Find out more information regarding PND, the more you know and understand the better you are equipped to deal with it and support your partner. Please talk to us at **House of Light** if you need further support/info.

- Don't force the mother to do anything that she does not want to do; added pressure will make her feel worse.

- Ensure she gets food and plenty of rest. Eating little and often is fine. You can prepare things for her, as she may not have the energy to cook and prepare food. Resting is vital in recovery.

- Don't point out anything that she may not have done, for example cleaning up, unfinished jobs, not taking care of herself.

- Don't ever say "Pull yourself together" or "what have you got to be depressed about" or "you don't know how lucky you are." PND is an illness. No-one chooses to feel this way.

- It will be tough but when you have got through this together your relationship will be even stronger.

- Look after yourself too! It can be draining caring for someone who is ill, ensure you are getting support and someone to talk to. Ask for help if you need it. Please feel free to **call us** at **House of Light** anytime you need to offload or chat.



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Call Us: 0800 043 2031

## WHAT DOES HOUSE OF LIGHT DO?

House of Light has supported thousands of women and their families affected by Antenatal and Postnatal Illness since 2007.

We offer:

### ONE TO ONE COUNSELLING AT HOUSE OF LIGHT

We can offer Integrative Counselling, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Person Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy. Counselling provides a safe space to talk through your worries and problems. It can help give you an insight and a better understanding of yourself and the issues you face. This can empower you to make choices and positive changes. Talking about how you feel can bring a huge sense of relief.

### E-MAIL SUPPORT

We understand it may be hard to talk about how you feel. Please feel free to e-mail if this feels more comfortable for you. This is available **Monday – Friday: 9am – 5pm.**

**CALL US: 0800 043 2031 OR 01482 580499**

**TEXT: 07854 220790**

**E-MAIL: [help@pndsupport.co.uk](mailto:help@pndsupport.co.uk)**

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### HELP FOR FATHERS, PARTNERS AND CARERS

Fathers can also develop Postnatal Illness. Birth and parenthood can be a challenging time. We are here for Fathers too.

We also support family members or carers of someone who is experiencing Postnatal Illness.

House of Light is a Registered Charity and we welcome donations or fundraising events to enable us to continue our vital work to support families in need.

### TELEPHONE SUPPORT

Our helpline is available **Monday – Friday: 9am – 5pm.** Messages can be left out of hours.



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