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Home Illnesses and conditions Mental health Postnatal depression Postnatal depression is a type of depression. Many parents experience it after having a baby. It’s a common problem, affecting more than 1 in every 10 mothers within a year of giving birth. It can also affect fathers and partners, although this is less common. With the right support, which can include self-help strategies and therapy, most people make a full recovery. Postnatal depression affects everyone differently. It can start at any point in the first year after giving birth. It can continue from depression in pregnancy. It may develop suddenly or gradually. Many people feel a bit down, tearful or anxious in the first week after giving birth. This is often called the ‘baby blues’ and is so common that it’s considered normal. The baby blues don’t last for more than 2 weeks after giving birth. If your symptoms last longer or start later, you could have postnatal depression. The main symptoms of postnatal depression include: These symptoms can affect your day-to-day life and your relationships with your baby, family and friends. Don’t struggle on alone and hope the problem will go away. It can take a lot longer to feel better if it’s not addressed. Postnatal depression can develop gradually and it can be hard to recognise. Some parents may avoid talking to family and friends about how they’re feeling. This may be because they worry they’ll be judged for not coping or not appearing happy. Signs for partners, family and friends to look out for in new parents include: If you think someone you know is depressed, encourage them to talk about their feelings. This could be to talk to you, a friend, their GP or their health visitor. The cause of postnatal depression isn’t completely clear. Some of the factors it has been associated with include: Even if you don’t have any of these symptoms, having a baby is a life-changing event that can sometimes trigger depression. It often takes time to adapt to becoming a new parent. Looking after a small baby can be stressful and exhausting. Postnatal depression can be lonely, distressing and frightening. But, support and treatments are available. With the right treatment and support, most people make a full recovery, although it can take time. Talk to your GP about the pros and cons of different treatments so you can decide together what’s best for you. Your GP might also want to check your physical health to see if there are any problems that may need to be addressed as well. For example, you may be anaemic after giving birth. This could add to any feelings of depression you might have. Psychological therapies are usually the first treatment recommended for postnatal depression. Guided self-help involves working through a book or an online course. You can do this on your own or with some help from a therapist.