



What's happened to me?

Amy Schofield looks at natural ways to treat postnatal depression

“You must be thrilled!”, “I’m so happy for you”. When you have given birth to a beautiful, healthy

and longed for child, you expect to feel content, fulfilled and able to cope with this new little life that is totally reliant upon you. But for some women, the joy can turn to the mental and physical anguish of post natal depression (PND). At least one new mother in ten goes through PND, often when the baby is between four and six months old, although it can emerge at any time.

There are many reasons that PND can develop. Giving birth has a huge impact on the emotions, as well as the body. If the birth didn’t go according to plan, there can be feelings of guilt, grief and anger to deal with. Motherhood can be daunting, and at times, lonely. You are thrown into caring for a helpless human being 24 hours a day and you

“Early motherhood is exhausting. You’ve got to wake up in the night when your baby cries, live on very little sleep sometimes, and satisfy all the emotional demands of your baby,”

may feel trapped at home, as your own freedom to do as you like when you like has gone, going out requires military style planning, and you may feel exhausted. On top of all this, your relationship may suffer as you focus all your energies on your new baby. You might also have to adjust to losing some of your income, your independence, and your sense of who you are.

Mental indications

Post natal depression can take many forms, and symptoms can be different for everyone. PND should not be confused with the “baby blues”, which is very common. Symptoms of the baby blues include feeling weepy, irritable,

and low. It usually starts around the third day, but normally goes by the 10th day after childbirth. PND, however, usually develops within the first four to six weeks after childbirth, though it can start even several months afterwards. Symptoms of PND include panic attacks and anxiety; feeling physically ill and experiencing symptoms that are unusual for you such as chest pains, breathing problems, headaches, dizziness, many minor illnesses and stomach upsets; worrying constantly about the health of yourself, your baby, other children or family and friends; obsessive thoughts; a “fuggy” head; irrational fears; feelings that you are a “bad” mother or a “bad” person; a constant feeling of doom or