



Inland Empire
**Perinatal
Mental Health
Collaborative**

Just the Facts!

Women with Maternal Mental Health Disorders

February 28, 2013 By: Inland Empire Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative

- 2/3 of all mentally ill adults are parents. (Nicholson, et al., 2002).
- Second only to heart disease, depression is a major medical problem in the U.S. (Michaud, CM, et al., 2001)
- Most studies report that between 10 to 15% of women with children experience postpartum depression. For teenage mothers the rate is about 26% and for women living in poverty the number can be as high as 35%.
- Most Medicaid pediatricians and obstetricians ***do not routinely screen for maternal depression*** (Scheeringa, et al., 2005).
- Research from 2008 has shown that a high cortisol level, the hormone associated with stress, is transmitted from a depressed mother to her infant via breast milk (Tackett, 2009).
- Lack of sleep may trigger increased risk for depression and anxiety and research on women with postpartum psychosis indicate that they often were awake for 3 or 4 days before they had their final break with reality and had to be hospitalized (Tackett – seminar on Maternal Depression, July 2009 in City of Orange).
- Infants and children of parents with mental illness show more difficulties in regulating their affect and emotions (Hammen, 2003).
- According to several studies in the early 1990s, children of depressed mothers are more significantly delayed in cognition and language development than peers raised by mothers who are not depressed. (Hammen, 2003).
- A mother's depression adversely affects the parent-child bonding process (Murray and Cooper, 1997) and infants show more distress during attachment play with their depressed mother (Field, 1995).
- Depression in infants can be documented as young as 4 months of age (Zero to Three, 2005).
- According to Zero to Three, women who are depressed often limit their interactions with their babies to providing the basic necessities of life or in response to an infants crying or fussing and are less likely to notice the infants invitation for a positive social interaction, such as smiling and seeking eye contact (Zero to Three, 2005).

- The most common reason for a pediatric appointment in the first three months postpartum is for colic and colic is often associated with poor mother-infant attachment which increases the likelihood of the mother experiencing postpartum depression (Tackett, 2009).
- Infants raised by a caregiver who is depressed are more socially and emotionally withdrawn from the caregiver, make less eye contact, are more fussy, are difficult to put to sleep, are challenging to soothe, have more developmental delays, and are more likely to be reported as having colic-like symptoms (Zero to Three, 2005).
- Toddlers with depressed mothers, researchers report to be more aggressive and have impulse control problems (Zero to Three 2005).
- When there is a poor temperamental fit between a mother and an infant, problems of bonding and attachment may result (Munoz, R. et al. 2007).
- In a study of two year olds in an early care setting, researchers found that nearly two-fifths were insecurely attached to their mothers (Chernoff, et. al 2007).
- In a study of parents of children in Head Start programs, 80% of those needing mental health services did not receive them (Razzino, et al., 2004).
- Early health issues, including prematurity or hospitalization, of an infant put the mother at greater risk for postpartum depression (Tackett, 2009).
- One longitudinal study of mothers and children concluded that the effects of postpartum depression are long-term, not short-term (The Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2003).
- There is currently no subsidized treatment program for women suffering from one of these disorders in all of San Bernardino County.
- The only subsidized treatment program for women in Riverside County is funded through First 5 Riverside in collaboration with the non-profit, The Wylie Center, and they are only able to serve 12 women annually.
- There is not a single reproductive psychiatrist in all of Riverside or San Bernardino County who accepts MediCal.
- Pregnancy MediCal most often only covers women's health and mental health needs through their 6 week postpartum check-up with their OB/GYN, even though these disorders may not be diagnosed until many weeks or months later.
- According to the Center for Disease Control, your highest lifetime risk for homicide is in your first year of life, and most often at the hands of your parent who has either a mental health disorder, a substance abuse disorder, or there is domestic violence in the home.

Bibliography

Just the Facts: Women with Maternal Mental Health Disorders

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