New Dads Get the After-Baby Blues Too

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New moms aren't the only ones who suffer postpartum depression. About 10 percent of new fathers get paternal postpartum depression, according to a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association and reported by HealthDay News.

"This study brings attention to a very important issue that is sometimes overlooked," said Shona Vas, PhD, an assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Chicago Medical Center. "As joyous an occasion as the birth of a new baby is, it's a tremendous transition, and transitions are stressful. And, it's a change that comes with significant impact on your day-to-day functioning, affecting sleep, taking care of yourself, exercising and more."

To better understand the incidence of paternal postpartum depression, researchers reviewed data from 43 studies including more than 28,000 men. Signs of paternal depression included a sad mood, loss of interest in activities, fatigue, sleep problems and feelings of hopelessness and irritability.

Study findings showed 10 percent of men experienced depression either before or after the baby's birth. New dads' depression rates peaked to about 25 percent when infants were between 3 to 6 months old.

Researchers also discovered that if one parent was depressed it increased the partner's chance of developing depression too.

"Even if you don't want to seek services for depression for yourself, seek services because your depression is likely to affect your kids," said James Paulson, PhD, an associate professor and clinical psychologist at Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk, and the study's lead author. "Depression occurs in families; it's not just affecting dad. Depression can't be looked at in isolation. When parents are depressed, children may have a higher risk of behavioral issues, and with things such as learning language or learning to read."

Researchers suggested that parents get educated about depression before the baby's birth to better understand their risk of getting it, what to look for and what they could do to treat it.

Although men are less likely to seek the help of a mental health professional, Paulson said, a family doctor may be able to help men open up and connect to the resources they need.

Learn more about postpartum depression here.

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