Purpose:

Many mothers experience baby blues following the birth of their child. Talk with the expectant mother about the difference between baby blues and postpartum depression, symptoms to watch for, and what to do if she notices any symptoms of postpartum depression.

Background:

Many women experience a mild depression commonly referred to as “baby blues” following the birth of their babies. Baby blues appear within a few days of childbirth and may last a few weeks.

Postpartum depression is more severe than baby blues. Symptoms begin following childbirth, but can appear quickly or as long as several months following the baby’s arrival. Postpartum depression can happen following any pregnancy and is even more common in second pregnancies than first pregnancies.

If a mother begins feeling depressed following her baby’s birth, she should refer to her medical care provider for a depression screening and possible treatment. Although mothers may be reluctant to seek help or embarrassed to admit they feel depressed, mothers should be reassured that post-partum depression is a treatable medical condition, not a personal flaw or weakness. Early intervention and treatment reduce the risk of serious problems and improve the likelihood of a quick recovery.

Signs and Symptoms of Post-Partum Depression:

- Extreme fatigue
- Severe insomnia
- Changes in appetite
- Lack of joy in life
- Emotional numbness or feeling trapped
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Lack of concern for one’s self or baby
- Excessive concern for one’s baby
- Loss of sexual interest or sexual responsiveness
- Strong feelings of failure or inadequacy
- Severe mood swings
- High expectations and an overly demanding attitude
- Difficulty making sense of things

Treatment Options:

- Support groups
- Individual counseling or psychotherapy
- Antidepressants or other medications
- Additional methods of self-care to be used in conjunction with professional medical care
  - Get healthy amounts of rest
  - Eat properly
  - Participate in physical activity daily
  - Stay connected with friends and family
  - Ask friends and family for occasional help with child care and/or household responsibilities
  - Take some time for yourself – Get dressed, leave the house to visit a friend or run an errand
  - Spend time with other mothers
  - Make time to be alone with your partner
Baby TALK Postpartum Depression

Coming Alongside?
An informed mother who is able to recognize the symptoms of postpartum depression should they appear will be better able to address those concerns by seeking an appropriate diagnosis and treatment through her medical care provider. Through conversation, discuss what the mother already knows about baby blues and postpartum depression. Pay close attention to the expectant mother’s experience with and feelings towards depression.

Activity:
Encourage the expectant mother to identify possible symptoms of postpartum depression and then ways in which she could practice self-care. Initiate the conversation by viewing the expectant mother as the expert and inquiring about what she already knows. Deliver any additional thoughts or ideas with “I wonder” statements in order to avoid lecturing or becoming the expert in the conversation.

For the Professional:
- What does the expectant mother know about postpartum depression?
- How does the expectant mother feel about the possibility of developing postpartum depression?
- What is the mother’s plan if she thinks she may be experiencing postpartum depression?
- Does the expectant mother have a support system she can rely on after delivery?
- Are there any community services that could benefit the expectant mother?
- What can I do to support this mother and family?

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Pregnancy

Tell me about your pregnancy.
What changes are you noticing in your body? What do you think those changes mean?
How have your moods been?
What do you know about postpartum depression? Baby blues?
How will you know if you are experiencing postpartum depression?
What are some things you could do if you think you may be experiencing postpartum depression?
How would it feel to share with someone that you have symptoms of postpartum depression? What can you do if you find it hard to share this information with someone?
What are some things you could do to take care of yourself once the baby is born?

Parenting

How do your moods affect your baby now? How will your moods affect your baby after delivery?
How does taking good care of yourself help you to be a better parent?
Why is it important for your baby that you address postpartum depression as soon as possible?

System of Support

Why do you think it’s important to ask friends and family for help once the baby is born?
What might you ask others to help you with once the baby is born?
What have others told you about postpartum depression? What do you think about that?
Who can you talk with about your feelings?
If you are having any symptoms of postpartum depression, what will you do?
“Baby blues” commonly occur after the birth of a baby. Baby blues are experienced within a few days of childbirth and may last a few weeks.

Postpartum depression is more severe than baby blues. Symptoms begin after childbirth, but can appear quickly or as long as several months following the baby’s arrival. Postpartum depression can happen following any pregnancy, even if you have had babies before and never experienced postpartum depression.

If you begin feeling depressed following your baby’s birth, contact your medical care provider for a depression screening and possible treatment. *Never feel embarrassed about feelings of depression.* Postpartum depression is a treatable medical condition, not a personal flaw or weakness. Seeking help for postpartum depression as quickly as possible will improve the likelihood of a quick recovery.

Throughout the course of your pregnancy, consider journaling to help organize your thoughts and feelings.

I will make sure to care for myself after my baby’s birth by…

If I experience any of these symptoms related to postpartum depression, I will tell someone who cares about me…

Talking care of myself will help me be a better parent because…

When times get rough, I can focus my thoughts on this positive statement…