

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS

The birth of a child is a major life event that can be joyous, but also stressful in its new demands and responsibilities. Hormonal changes and lack of sleep can contribute to “baby blues” or mild depressive symptoms, such as occasional sadness, crying, irritability, and trouble concentrating, which are common and transient.⁶³ Depression occurs when these symptoms, including depressed mood and loss of interest in activities, are severe and last for more than two weeks.⁶⁴ Other symptoms can include changes in appetite, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, and suicidal thoughts.

In 2006–2008, 14.1 percent of recent mothers in a 22-state area reported postpartum de-

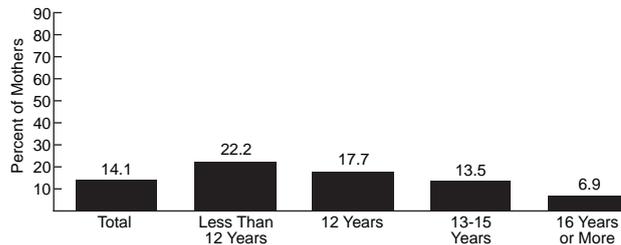
pressive symptoms since the birth of their child in the previous 2–9 months. Postpartum depressive symptoms varied significantly by education level, from 6.9 percent among mothers with at least 16 years of education to 22.2 percent among mothers with less than 12 years of education. The proportion of mothers reporting postpartum depressive symptoms exceeded 20 percent among non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic Black, and non-Hispanic mothers of multiple race and was lowest among non-Hispanic White mothers (11.9 percent; data not shown). Factors that may increase the risk of postpartum depression include previous depressive episodes, stressful life events, and limited social support.^{64,65}

Early diagnosis and treatment are important

as postpartum depression can interfere with maternal-infant bonding and child development.⁶⁴ Screening for depression is encouraged by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists both during and after pregnancy. In 2006–2008, 73.9 percent of recent mothers in an 8-state area reported that a health care provider talked with them about “baby blues” or postpartum depression during or after their most recent pregnancy. Non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native and non-Hispanic White mothers were most likely to report that a health care worker discussed postpartum depression (83.7 and 78.8 percent, respectively), while non-Hispanic Asian and mothers of multiple races were least likely to do so (58.9 and 61.5 percent, respectively).

Postpartum Depressive Symptoms Among Women with a Recent Live Birth,* by Maternal Education Level, 2006–2008**

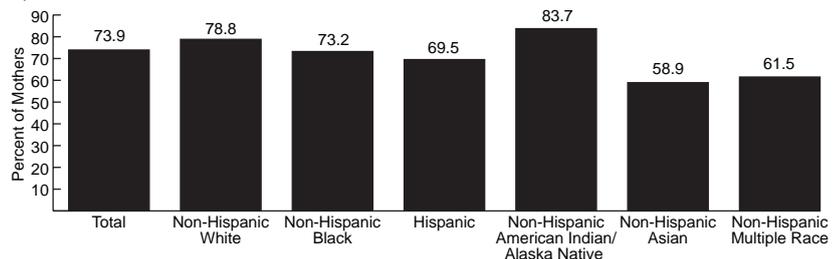
Source II.17: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System



*Defined as reporting often or always feeling depressed or a loss of interest in activities since the birth of the infant; mothers completed surveys between 2 and 9 months postpartum. **Includes data from a total of 22 states; 14 states contributed all 3 years.

Women with a Recent Live Birth Who Reported that a Health Care Provider Discussed Postpartum Depression, by Race/Ethnicity,* 2006–2008**

Source II.17: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System



*The sample of Native Hawaiians was too small to produce reliable results. **Includes data from a total of 8 states and New York City; 7 states contributed all 3 years. Respondents completed surveys between 2 and 9 months postpartum.