

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.⁶⁸ Depression occurs when these symptoms, including depressed mood and loss of interest in activities, are severe and last for more than two weeks.⁶⁹ Other symptoms can include changes in appetite, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, and suicidal thoughts.

In 2009, 11.9 percent of recent mothers in a 29-State area reported postpartum depres-

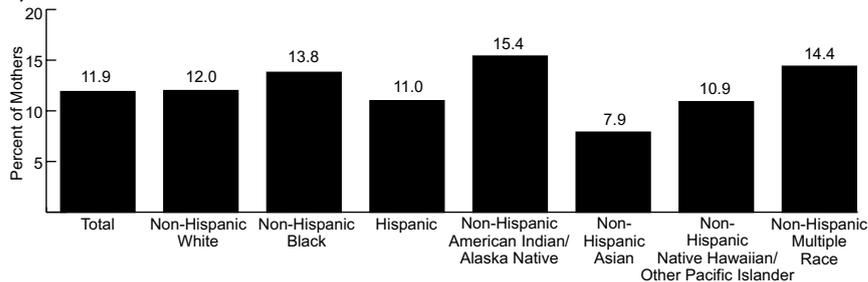
sive symptoms since the birth of their child in the previous 2–9 months. Postpartum depressive symptoms varied significantly by race and ethnicity. The proportion of mothers reporting postpartum depressive symptoms was highest among non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Natives, non-Hispanic mothers of multiple races, and non-Hispanic Black mothers (15.4, 14.4, and 13.8 percent, respectively), and was lowest among non-Hispanic Asian mothers (7.9 percent). Postpartum depressive symptoms also varied greatly by level of maternal education, 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 (data not shown). Factors that may increase the risk of postpartum depression include previous

depressive episodes, stressful life events, and limited social support.^{68,69}

Early diagnosis and treatment are important as postpartum depression can interfere with maternal-infant bonding and child development.⁶⁹ Screening for depression is encouraged by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists both during and after pregnancy. In 2007–2009, 76.6 percent of recent mothers in a 10-State area reported that a health care provider talked with them about “baby blues” or postpartum depression during or after their most recent pregnancy; this ranged from 73.0 percent of mothers with less than 12 years of education to 79.2 percent of mothers with 16 or more years of education (see *Women's Health USA 2011* for estimates by race and ethnicity).

Postpartum Depressive Symptoms* Among Mothers with a Recent Live Birth, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009**

Source II.26: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System

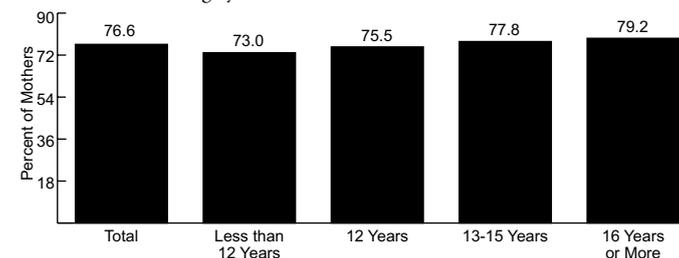


*Defined as a sum of 10 or higher in response to 3 questions of how often the mom reported feeling down, depressed, or sad; hopeless; or slowed down since the birth of the baby, where 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=always.

**Includes data from a total of 29 States; mothers completed surveys between 2 and 9 months postpartum.

Women with a Recent Live Birth Who Reported That a Health Care Provider Discussed Postpartum Depression, by Maternal Education,* 2007–2009**

Source II.20: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System



**Includes data from a total of 10 States and New York City; 4 States contributed all 3 years; mothers completed surveys between 2 and 9 months postpartum.