Pregnancy and postpartum psychosis (PPP) are medical emergencies, with the mother needing immediate medical care including thorough assessment, intervention, and treatment.  

PPP impacts an estimated 1-2 women per 1,000 births.  

The onset of psychosis is usually sudden, often within the first 2-3 weeks following childbirth. Psychosis can also occur during pregnancy and immediately following childbirth.

A woman is 23 times more likely to experience psychosis in the month following childbirth than at any other point in her life.

The most significant risk factors for PPP are a personal or family history of bipolar disorder, or a previous psychotic episode. However, up to 50% of those who experience PPP have no personal or family history of mental illness.

There is an estimated 4% infanticide risk and 5% suicide risk associated with PPP.

**SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF PPP**

- **Delusions**: Having false or strange beliefs, often with religious themes
- **Hallucinations**: Seeing, hearing, smelling, touching things that are not real
- **Paranoia and Suspiciousness**: Feeling extremely irritated
- **Rapid Mood Swings**: Feeling extremely irritated
- **Rapid Mood Swings**: Feeling extremely irritated
- **Confusion Impairment**: Difficulty reading, doing simple math, or communicating effectively (talking quickly, not finishing sentences, inability to explain things or give directions)
- **Hyperactivity**: Increased need for or inability to sleep
- **Sleep Problems**: Decreased need for or inability to sleep
- **Focus on Death, with Statements Such as**
  - “I’d rather die”
  - “I knew I had to die”
  - “I thought I was going to die”

PPP Awareness Day is the first Friday each May. Join advocates in raising awareness about and funds to support pregnancy and postpartum psychosis awareness.

**Citations**

5. Massachusetts General Hospital, *Postpartum Psychosis Project Website*.  

**TREATMENT**

Treatment for PPP almost always includes a combination of:

- Hospitalization
- Medication
- Therapy

Find a list of intensive treatment programs at bit.ly/PPPtreat
PREGNANCY & POSTPARTUM PSYCHOSIS RESOURCES

FILM
NOT CAROL is a documentary that examines postpartum psychosis through the prism of Carol Coronado, who tragically took the lives of her three young daughters while suffering postpartum psychosis. Carol’s story shines a light on the public health epidemic of severe postpartum mental health illnesses including postpartum psychosis.

STAGE
Playing Monopoly With God is a one-woman show featuring comedienne and storyteller Melissa Bangs, who tells her story of surviving postpartum psychosis with humor and self-love. Melissa’s hope is that by sharing her lived experience, others will be inspired to shed their shame and tell their own true stories.

WEBSITES
Action on Postpartum Psychosis (UK): app-network.org
Massachusetts General Hospital Postpartum Psychosis Project: bit.ly/massgenppp

BOOKS
A Mother’s Climb Out of Darkness: A Story about Overcoming Postpartum Psychosis
By Jennifer Hentz Moyer

BETH: A Story of Postpartum Psychosis
By Shirley Cervene Halvorson

INFERNO: A Memoir of Motherhood and Madness
By Catherine Cho

Insanity’s Shoes: My Running Trip Through Postpartum Psychosis
By Angela Tompkins

Runaway Mom: A Race to Regain My Sanity After Bipolar-Induced Postpartum Psychosis
By Maggie Reese

Setting the Wire: A Memoir of Postpartum Psychosis
By Sarah C. Townsend

Sixteen Days in a Psych Ward: How to Notice the Signs of Postpartum Depression and Psychosis
By Trina Holmes

Understanding Postpartum Psychosis: A Temporary Madness
By Teresa M. Twomey, JD

PSI provides the following:
- List of PPP resources
- Peer support for those impacted by PPP and their families
- List of intensive treatment programs

PSI has a Postpartum Psychosis Task Force led by individuals with lived experience and includes providers with expertise treating PPP; researchers; advocates for legislative change; and PSI staff and board members.

The Task Force organizes around actions to improve public and provider awareness; increase and improve resources; reduce stigma; and provide legal and legislative advocacy.

The goal of the Task Force is to develop resources and integrate knowledge and sensitivity about the lived experience of PPP—as well as the unique insights of survivor-advocates—into all perinatal mental health advocacy, awareness, education, resources, and services.

LEARN MORE ABOUT PREGNANCY & POSTPARTUM PSYCHOSIS

RECOGNIZING AND MANAGING POSTPARTUM PSYCHOSIS: A CLINICAL GUIDE FOR OBSTETRIC PROVIDERS
bit.ly/nih-ppguide

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