**IS THIS JUST THE “BABY BLUES”?**

Many women feel a bit down, tearful or anxious in the first week after giving birth. This is often called the baby blues, and is so common it’s considered normal.

If the symptoms last longer or start later, you could have post-natal depression, which can start any time in the first year after giving birth. New fathers may also be affected. Symptoms include:

* sadness
* lack of energy or enjoyment
* tiredness and trouble sleeping
* difficulty bonding with your baby
* avoiding contact with other people.

Fortunately a range of help and support is available, so don’t struggle alone. Depression doesn’t mean that you’re a bad parent or that it’s your fault – it’s an illness like any other, and can be treated. Things that help include:

* self-help: talking to family and friends
* the NHS website for information and help
* psychological support: your GP may refer you for a course of therapy
* antidepressants: your doctor can prescribe a medicine that’s safe to take even while breastfeeding.

So if you feel you may have post-natal depression, don’t suffer in silence; speak to your health visitor or doctor as soon as you can to get it sorted.

*Sent by Drs Virmani and Bedi’s Patient Participation Group*