

Post Natal Depression is no stigma

SUSAN MacNicholas, one of SMA's Every Step experts, says the main thing women need to realise is that post natal depression is not something to be ashamed of.

Trained midwife Susan said: "PND can be triggered by a number of things.

"Women who have a history of depression or have suffered a difficult pregnancy or birth are particularly vulnerable.

"If the mother or baby is suffering health problems, this can also be a factor.

"Social circumstances have also become an issue in certain cases where long distances from family and friends exist, so look for support from people you know and love after your birth.

"PND can occur anytime but usually from four to six weeks post-natally up to six months.

"The sooner it is diagnosed and treated, the quicker it can be resolved.

"Signs can include extreme tiredness, lethargy, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, antisocial behaviour, becoming withdrawn, paranoia, lacking in confidence, crying a lot, and in extreme cases feeling hatred and despair towards oneself and maybe even towards the baby.

"If what you are feeling lasts more than a few days then it's not baby blues or hormones – you need to speak to your GP or health visitor.

"Do not be ashamed – PND is rising and currently affects between 10% and 15% of all mothers.

"Remember it is not your fault and there is help out there."

Susan says research now suggests that a pure Omega 3 supplement, taken during pregnancy, can help reduce the risk of PND.

For more advice on post natal depression visit www.pnd.ie. To get advice on all parenting issues, visit the SMA expert panel at www.rollercoaster.ie/sma. For Susan's post and ante-natal classes see www.2as1.ie.