
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For additional information contact:

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Governor Rick Snyder declares May Postpartum Depression Awareness Month

Grand Rapids - Recognizing the crucial role that healthy families play in a vibrant community Governor Rick Snyder has proclaimed that May 2015 be recognized as Postpartum Depression awareness month.

As the Governor outlined in his proclamation more than 2500 women and their families are affected in Michigan each year and many cases go unreported.

The Kent County Health Department in partnership with the Healthy Kent Perinatal Mood Disorders Coalition welcomes this proclamation and is making real strides in this issue. Postpartum Depression is a Perinatal Mood Disorder (PMD) that is a common complication of pregnancy. Perinatal refers to the period during and up to a year after pregnancy. Symptoms include not only depression but anxiety, panic attacks, intrusive thoughts, and obsessive and compulsive behaviors. The prevalence of PMD can take a toll on the mother's well-being and can impact the pregnancy and birth outcome, maternal role function and infant/child development.

According to The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) PMD symptoms often go unnoticed because they are similar to the symptoms of the pregnancy itself. ACOG as well as the Kent County Health Department recommends pregnant women be screened at the initial prenatal visit and depending on the level of risk, continued screening and additional interventions as needed.

The Kent County Health Department wants mothers to know that help is near. There are effective treatments. Early intervention can make all the difference. Working with partners on the Healthy Kent Perinatal Mood Disorders Coalition, the community has designed a comprehensive network of support. "Asking for help is not a sign of weakness," says Barb Hawkins-Palmer, Executive Director of Healthy Kent. "It is unrealistic for a new mom to believe that she can now accomplish all of the things she did before the baby arrived. Many mom's report to us that they feel alone and that no one understands what they are going through. Without support many women isolate themselves and close the door on the care and attention that they need."

The most recent evidence suggests that nearly 20% of new mothers will develop a mood disorder during the perinatal period. PMD affects women of all ages and all racial, cultural and economic backgrounds.

"The majority of these women need treatment and many just are not getting it," says Hawkins-Palmer.

The Healthy Kent Perinatal Mood Disorders Coalition developed a PMD Resource Manual. The manual includes the most up to date information on PMD and was designed to help providers identify and manage PMD with their patients and clients. The resource manual along with other information and resources for maternal and infant health can be found at: <http://healthykent.org/infanthealth> .

For more information please contact Barb Hawkins-Palmer at barb.hawkins-palmer@kentcountymi.gov or (616) 632-7281. For emergencies call 911 or call network 180 at (800) 749-7720 for referral and counseling services. Remember, you are not alone, you are not to blame, and help is near.

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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