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## Having A Baby Isn't Blissful For All New Mothers

By Kathleen Kendall-Tackett  
April 23, 2008

DURHAM, N.H. -- For many women, the lovely images of life with a new baby don't jibe with their reality. Instead of feeling happy, they feel overwhelmed.

University of New Hampshire researcher Kathleen Kendall-Tackett says there are a myriad of treatments available to new mothers experiencing postpartum depression. She is the author of a new monograph, "Non-Pharmacological Treatments for Depression in New Mothers" (2008, Hale Publishing).

May 2008 has been designated "Postpartum Mood and Anxiety Disorders Awareness Month" by New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch.

Postpartum mood, anxiety and thought disorders -- often referred to simply as postpartum depression -- affect 10 percent to 20 percent of pregnant and postpartum women as well as their children and partners. Kendall-Tackett's research shows that in high-risk populations, that percentage can be as high as 40 percent to 50 percent.

"The consequences of postpartum depression are simply too serious to ignore. We can't just hope that it will resolve or go away on its own," Kendall-Tackett says. "Depression is also potentially quite harmful for babies. Children of depressed mothers have more social, behavioral, and cognitive difficulties than their counterparts with non-depressed mothers."

There are a wide range of non-drug treatments that are effective even with major depression. And all are compatible with breastfeeding. In her new monograph, Kendall-Tackett reviews evidence supporting:

- Omega-3 fatty acids
- Bright light therapy
- Exercise
- Social support
- Psychotherapy

- St. John's Wort

"Depression in new mothers needs to be treated promptly. For mothers who refuse antidepressants or for whom antidepressants may be inappropriate, we have more evidence-based, non-pharmaceutical options than ever before," Kendall-Tackett says. "And because all of these choices are compatible with breastfeeding, mothers are never forced to choose between their mental health and breastfeeding their babies - a choice no mother should have to make."

Kendall-Tackett is a health psychologist at the University of New Hampshire and researcher at the UNH Family Research Lab. She chairs the New Hampshire Breastfeeding Taskforce and is an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant. Her current research interests include the impact of maternal depression and the psychological aspects of breastfeeding.

### **LINKS OF INTEREST**

"Non-Pharmacological Treatments for Depression in New Mothers" (PDF)

<http://www.unh.edu/news/docs/KKT2008.pdf>

"Treatments for Depressed Moms that are Breastfeeding Friendly" (Podcast)

<http://breastfeeding.blog.motherwear.com/2008/02/podcast-breastf.html>

"A Breastfeeding-Friendly Approach to Depression in New Mothers" (PDF)

<http://www.nhbreastfeedingtaskforce.org/nhbftf-ppd-curriculum.pdf>