



From the desk of Dr Harry

New Research on Post Natal Depression and crying babies

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It's certainly been my experience as a Pediatrician that maternal depression highly correlates with infant irritability. A recent study published in *Acta Paediatrica*, "Infantile colic, prolonged crying and maternal postnatal depression" provides evidence supporting that association. Read this abstract, click [here now](#) or on the link below.

I often wonder which comes first. Does prolonged infant crying result in maternal postnatal depression? Could a mother's low mood affect the temperament her baby? My view is that there is an *interplay* between the two. This research does conclude that "*Both infantile colic and prolonged crying were associated with high maternal depression scores.*" It is also true that depressed parents perceive their baby's irritability more sensitively and intensively.

Correlation certainly does not mean causation, but in clinical practice I find that the best outcome is achieved by managing both the depression and the infant crying. Postnatal depression can be managed with:

- early recognition and diagnosis (even in the 21st century, postnatal depression may remain undiagnosed)
- practical and emotional support
- good nutrition, sleep, exercise and fresh air
- psychotherapy
- group meetings with other parents and a health professional expert
- antidepressant medication

Excessive infant irritability (crying for at least 3 hours a day, for at least 3 days a week and for at least 3 weeks) requires:

- a thorough health assessment by an infant nurse or doctor
- checking for an possible underlying physical disorder such as a urinary tract infection, inadequate nutritional intake and protein allergy
- using a variety of simple settling strategies such as **SMS** your baby (**S**ounds, **M**ovement, **S**waddling)

The good news is that both prolonged infant crying and postnatal depression are manageable. Both will improve with treatment, simple settling strategies and time.

PND and infant irritability are both common issues and remember:

- **they are not your fault...you've done nothing wrong,** and
- **you are not alone.**

Research Abstract: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/122368936/abstract>

Dr Harry's Blog on PND and Fathers: <http://okidokiebaby.com/blog/category/new-fathers/>

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