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# The effect of post-natal symptoms of post-traumatic stress and depression on the couple's relationship and parent-baby bond


Ylva M. Parfitt  & Susan Ayers

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## Abstract

**Objectives:** Research has shown that between 1 and 3% of women may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following childbirth. However, the potential effect of childbirth on fathers, and the implications of post-natal symptoms of PTSD for family relationships, have received little attention. The current study therefore examined the potential effects of PTSD symptoms on the couple's relationship and parent-baby bond.

**Design:** Internet-based questionnaire study.

**Methods:** One hundred and fifty-two parents (126 women and 26 men) completed questionnaire measures of PTSD, depression, quality of the couple's relationship, and the parent-baby bond.

Results: Symptoms of PTSD and depression were significantly correlated with the couples' relationship and parent-baby bond. Structural equation modelling found the model that best fitted the data was one where PTSD symptoms had a direct effect on the parent-baby bond, but the effect of PTSD on the couples' relationship was mediated by depression.

Conclusions: The results indicate the importance of examining the psychological reactions of men and women after birth; and suggest that symptoms of PTSD have an effect on the parent-baby bond. However, methodological considerations mean further research is needed to replicate and extend this study before firm conclusions can be drawn.

Keywords:

childbirth post-natal depression PTSD parent-baby bond couple's relationship

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