

Bringing a baby home can be a joyous moment, but for Miriam Halera, postpartum depression and baby blues took a heavy toll. The feelings of sadness, anxiety, and irritability made it difficult for her to bond with her baby. Today, she offers postpartum support to new mothers through Mama's Touch Recovery Home, Ritah Mukasa Writes

With her first two children, Miriam Halera, a mother, wife and proprietor of Infotrust Property consultants, a real estate company, enjoyed her postpartum experience. She had her elder sister to lean on, who pampered her during and after the pregnancies.

"My sister would bathe and massage me (after giving birth) and this helped me to recover in two weeks," she says.

Her babies, too, were well cared for with extra hands during the newborn phase.

By the time she had her next two children in 2023 and 2025, sadly, her sister had passed on. This meant no support during these crucial moments.

"My mother was far away in the village. I would call her every day, asking her this and that about pregnancy," she says.

And when Halera delivered in 2023, her younger sister nursed her, but because

HOW STRUGGLE WITH POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION INSPIRED HALERA TO ESTABLISH RECOVERY CENTRE

she was not well-versed in postpartum care, she couldn't do much. And as such, Halera says she did not get the care she needed; it took her many months to recover. And when postpartum depression set in, she did not know what to do.

"I visited a wellness centre in Kansanga, Kampala, to help me recover. The services were good, especially the traditional massage using hot water and old banana leaves," she says.

Halera paid for seven days,

each at sh500,000, but only managed to attend once. "I got busy with work and the traffic jam was unbearable." This was because the centre had no accommodation, so travelling to and from was exhausting for her. Halera gave up on the treatment and travelled to the village her mother.

"That was the best decision. I made. Mom took care of the baby and me," she says.

By that time, at eight months postpartum, Halera was still

spotting, which indicated that she had not healed properly.

"Mom would massage me with the hot water and banana leaves and it worked," she says.

From her experience, Halera decided to help birthing mothers going through the same kind of predicament. She would set up a recovery home.

She did her research, made benchmarking trips to South Africa, Egypt, Dubai, Kenya and around Uganda.

Halera realised all the centres she visited did not have residential facilities. The available ones were mixed: Mothers and old people.

"I decided to settle for a residential home," she says.

Halera's husband supported her fully. The couple already had a four-bedroom house in Kiwatule, Kampala; they started renovations in November last year.

"My husband, being a designer, helped with the



Halera with two of her children. She says every mother needs care to recover well

HOW TO TELL IF A MOTHER HAS PPD

After delivery, a mother is generally expected to show excitement about the baby. A lack of interest or emotional detachment can be a red flag.

Dr Mukuzi Katongole, a gynaecologist, explains: "When a mother stops taking care of the baby or expresses hatred toward the child, it is a sign of depression."

Other symptoms include sleep disturbances, extreme fatigue, agitation, sluggishness in daily activities, loss of appetite, and frequent crying without an obvious reason. Some mothers make repeated, unnecessary visits to the hospital for themselves or the baby.

In addition, a mother may excessively worry about her ability to care for the baby, stop attending postnatal care appointments, or begin using alcohol or drugs. In severe cases, PPD can lead to suicidal thoughts. Some mothers may attempt suicide or harm the baby or those around them.

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interior design,” she says.

Halera targets corporates, experts and the business community. By the end of the year, she hopes to have established branches in other regions.

“You shouldn’t struggle alone. Seek help and protect yourself and the baby,” she says.

WHAT IS POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION?

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a type of depression that occurs after childbirth. According to Dr Paul Kasenene of Wellcare Health & Wellness Centre, PPD is characterised by extreme sadness, anxiety, anger, irritability and difficulty sleeping.

In severe cases, some mothers may even harm their babies. This condition can last for weeks or months, and Kasenene notes that “it is deeply misunderstood, yet it affects many mothers and their families.”

A mother with PPD may feel happy one moment and suddenly burst into tears the next, overwhelmed by emotions.

Kasenene explains that pregnancy is a very demanding period that can be hectic and traumatic, which may trigger depression.

Additionally, Dr Mukuzi Katongole, a gynaecologist, points out that when a woman conceives, progesterone

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION: IN SEVERE CASES, MOTHERS CAN HARM BABIES

ACTIVITIES

There are many activities to keep the mother busy, each designed to promote healing, emotional stability, and a renewed sense of well-being.

“For example, she can go for a massage, done by a South Africa-trained masseuse. Or do some workouts under a professional instructor. Thereafter, the mother can opt for a ‘herbal dip’ where she ‘soaks’ her body in a bathtub infused with herbal medicines,” Halera says.

She says the home also has a room for talk therapy, where a mother speaks to a counselling psychologist about her feelings and concerns. “The sessions are confidential as the mother and counsellor don’t see each other during the session.”

Asked about pricing, Halera says services start from sh200,000 a day.

and oestrogen levels rise dramatically. After childbirth, these hormones gradually decline over several days. However, in some mothers, the drop is sharp, which can lead to depression.

Some new mothers also experience anxiety and insomnia (inability to sleep), which may contribute to depression. This anxiety can stem from fears about their ability to care for the baby or concerns about being abandoned by loved ones.

Kasenene emphasises that brain health is crucial in treating emotional challenges, such as anxiety and depression.

“Ensure your body has enough nutrients for brain health,” he advises.

These include magnesium, vitamin D, omega-3 fatty acids and B vitamins (particularly vitamins B1, B9, B12, D and E).

During pregnancy and after childbirth, mothers are encouraged to eat



Expectant mothers are encouraged to get adequate rest to support better brain health

foods rich in magnesium, such as avocados, bananas, spinach, broccoli, onions,

and cashews. Other sources include pumpkin seeds, dark chocolate, figs and sunflower seeds. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as chia seeds, walnuts and fatty fish like tilapia, are also important.

Nutritional supplements can help stimulate the production of dopamine, the “feel-good” hormone; however, mothers should ensure that supplements are compatible with any medications they are taking.

Kasenene also stresses the importance of hydration, noting that water helps nutrients circulate in the brain.

Expectant mothers should exercise during pregnancy and after childbirth, depending on the method of delivery. Adequate rest during the day is equally important, as better rest supports better brain health.

Mothers are also encouraged to take deep breaths in the morning, at noon and in the evening to calm the mind and improve emotional wellness.

ABOUT THE RECOVERY CENTRE

The postpartum recovery home for mothers located in

Kiwatule offers relief from the pressures of home life, allowing a mother to focus on recovery.

“We understand how challenging this time can be, so the team is committed to providing compassionate care,” Halera says. She says once there, mothers receive intensive therapy tailored to their needs to ensure they get as much rest as possible.

The mother is bathed, dressed, massaged. Halera says the services start as soon as the mother conceives. She is escorted to antenatal visits up to the time she delivers.

“We advise our mothers to go to reputable hospitals to be safe,” she says. She also discourages home births and traditional attendants.

She adds: “During childbirth, there is a midwife to ensure the mother is well taken care of. When the mother is discharged, she doesn’t go home. Instead, she is driven to the recovery home. At the reception, she hands over the phone and other gadgets that might distract her. Thereafter, she heads to her room.”

According to Halera, the centre accommodates six mothers at a time.

The nursery (baby’s room) is a tranquil, safe space, blending aesthetic appeal with functionality. Each baby has a crib and a full-time nanny. “After breastfeeding and bonding, the nanny takes away the baby so the mother can rest,” Halera says.