

Women In The Military Deployed After Childbirth At Increased Risk For Depression

About 16,000 women on active duty in the U.S. military give birth each year. Most return to service after 6 weeks and can be deployed after 4 months. The potential for an increased risk of depression among new mothers who deploy and are exposed to combat experience is presented in a study published in *Journal of Women's Health*, a peer-reviewed publication from Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers. The article is available on the *Journal of Women's Health* website.*

Stacie Nguyen, MPH and co-authors from the Millennium Study Team, San Diego State University and Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton, California, and Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Bethesda, MD, analyzed data collected as part of a large study to assess the long-term health of U.S. military personnel. The article "Is Military Deployment a Risk Factor for Maternal Depression?" describes the findings for 1,660 women who gave birth during active duty service.

Women who deployed and reported combat experience after giving birth were at increased risk for depression compared to women who did not deploy after childbirth. Among women who deployed with combat exposure, those who had given birth did not have a significantly increased risk for depression compared to those who had not, suggesting that the risk was related more to combat than to factors related to childbirth.

"With increasing numbers of women in the military and being exposed to combat experiences, it is critical for us to better understand maternal depression among our female service members," says Susan G. Kornstein, MD, Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Women's Health*, Executive Director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Institute for Women's Health, Richmond, VA, and President of the Academy of Women's Health.

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