

Understanding Sources of Stress During “Doing the Month” Period to Avoid Postpartum Depression

A study reported by the Department of Nursing Studies, Faculty of Medicine, HKU in March 2005 revealed that “doing the month” was not necessarily protective and supportive to postpartum women. It raises the critical question of how postpartum women can adapt the rituals to fit the modern life.

The stress level of postpartum women perceived may influence their emotion and is an effective signal to predict postpartum depression. The study uncovered 4 key stress factors: “Bound by environmental constraint”, “Difficulties in following the proscriptions of the rituals”, “Conflicts between the parties involved” and “Attainment of maternal role”. This study is the only of its kind telling stress caused by “doing the month”.

More or less, the 4 key stress factors are induced by Chinese traditional belief. Women have to follow certain taboos in “doing the month” period. The women experience stress and bad feeling when they are forced to follow or when they fail to follow the rituals. The feeling of frustration even become stronger when they received different and contradictory opinions on what they should do.

Understanding the experiences and needs of postpartum women is essential to enhance the positive effects of practising the rituals and reducing unnecessary associated stress. The main emphasis is to allow new mothers to gain enough support so that they can recover early and to learn and adapt effectively to the maternal role.