

Postpartum Depression

When Caring for Your Baby Is Not What You Expected

Stories from other mothers

“This was my third baby, but it wasn’t the happy, joyful experience I had expected. I felt anxious and irritable. I didn’t want to get out of bed in the morning. I didn’t feel connected to my baby.”

– Sharon

“We were thrilled to bring home our first healthy baby. But in those first few weeks I felt tired and cried easily. I thought it was just the hormones and getting used to a newborn. After six months, when little things would still set me off, my husband convinced me to talk to my doctor.”

– Tina

“I love children and couldn’t wait to have my own. Then my husband went back to work, and I started having thoughts about hurting my baby. No matter what I did, I couldn’t stop the thoughts. I lived in fear but kept it a secret.”

– Isabel

“It has been two months since I saw my doctor, and I feel like a different person. The medicine has helped and my family has been very supportive. I have energy again, and I love being a mother.”

– Malia

You are not alone

Although postpartum depression is common, it is serious—and treatable. If you think you might have it, tell your doctor or another health care provider. With help, you can feel like yourself again.

The baby blues

Having a baby brings big changes in a woman’s life. These changes can be overwhelming. While most moms get past the “baby blues” within the first two weeks, some moms struggle for longer.

If the baby blues last longer than two weeks, you may have postpartum depression.

Postpartum depression

It is easy to confuse the symptoms of postpartum depression with normal hormone changes. How can you tell if it’s serious? Watch for these symptoms:

- Feeling sad, anxious or “empty”
- Lack of energy, feeling very tired
- Lack of interest in normal activities
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Feeling hopeless, helpless, guilty or worthless
- Feeling moody and irritable
- Problems concentrating or making simple decisions
- Thoughts about hurting your baby, even if you will not act on them
- Thoughts about death or suicide

Things you can do

Being a good mom means taking care of yourself. If you take care of yourself, you can take better care of your baby and your family.

- Get help. Talk with your care provider, call an emergency support line or ask a loved one to help you get the care you need.
- Ask your care provider about medicines that can be safely used for postpartum depression.
- Talk to a therapist, alone or in group therapy.
- Ask your faith or community leaders about other support resources.
- Learn as much as you can about postpartum depression.
- Get support from family and friends. Ask for help when you need it.
- Keep active by walking, stretching, swimming and so on.
- Get enough rest.
- Eat a healthy diet.

Don't give up! It may take more than one try to get the help you need.

What you should know

It is very common for new moms to have the "baby blues." They often start a few days after a baby's birth. Usually, feeling sad and irritable will not stop you from taking care of your baby or yourself.

If symptoms interfere with your life or last longer than two to three weeks, you may have postpartum depression. This affects up to 2 out of 10 moms. It can occur any time in your baby's first year.

Women who have a history of depression are more likely to become depressed during pregnancy or after birth. Depression can be caused by stress, hormone changes, trauma, lack of support and other factors.

If you are depressed, you need to get help. It will not get better on its own.

The best treatment

The most effective treatment for depression includes:

- Individual or group therapy
- Medicine that can be safely used while breastfeeding (prescribed by your doctor)
- Support from your family, friends and community

Who to contact for help

Crisis Connection

866-379-6363; TTY 612-379-6377

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800-273-TALK

United Way First Call for Help

2-1-1

Postpartum Support International

www.postpartum.net

Depression after Delivery, Inc.

www.depressionafterdelivery.com

PPD Hope Information Center

www.ppdhope.com

Culturally specific resources at the Mental Health Association of Minnesota

www.mentalhealthmn.org

Click on "Referrals & Resources" on the left.

Follow the link to "Culturally Sensitive Services."