

What is Postpartum Depression and Anxiety?

STRAIGHT TALK ON THE MOST COMMON COMPLICATION OF PREGNANCY



You're a new mom and thought you'd feel like you're floating on air. You planned, waited patiently and finally your new baby arrived. You suddenly found yourself feeling overwhelmed, alone and wondering why you were so excited. Being a mom is hard - really hard - but this seems like something more. Your mood is getting worse, you're snapping whenever your baby cries and your partner has become the target for your pent-up frustration. This is not what you thought motherhood would look like.

Postpartum depression (PPD) and postpartum anxiety (PPA) are part of a full spectrum of maternal mental health complications that can happen during pregnancy and after birth. Other mental illnesses that can happen during this time include obsessive compulsive disorder, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, mania and bipolar disorder and in rare cases, postpartum psychosis.

These illnesses can happen to any mom at any time during pregnancy or throughout the first year after birth. It may come as a surprise, but up to 1 in 5 Canadian moms experience a maternal mental illness making these the most common complication of pregnancy.

Below are some common symptoms of PPD/PPA that you may be experiencing although the symptoms are complex and there is no one size fits all approach to diagnosis and treatment. **Recovery is completely possible; if you or your partner is struggling, reach out and connect with professional help in your area.**

Depression

- Feeling completely overwhelmed
- Waves of constant sadness and guilt
- Sudden bursts of anger and rage (yes, rage!)
- Not feeling bonded to baby or that the baby might be better off without you
- Feeling like a huge burden to friends and family
- Feeling numb and disconnected
- Problems focusing or concentrating on tasks
- Ongoing sleep problems that only make you feel worse
- Difficulty eating and even drinking
- A sense of something bad happening

Anxiety?

- Feeling restless or the constant need to be moving or doing something at all times
- Overwhelmed by constant and irrational fears
- Can't settle down; relaxation is impossible
- Ongoing insomnia and other sleep problems even though you're exhausted
- Difficulty eating and loss of appetite
- Other physical symptoms including headache, nausea, chest pain, racing heart and dizziness
- Intrusive thoughts - these are best described as
- quick flashes of scary situations that pop into your
- head and make you feel afraid to be alone with the baby

The most important thing to understand about PPD/PPA is that these illnesses are not the fault of you or your partner. Above all we want you to know that PPD/PPA and other maternal mental illnesses are temporary and treatable with help.