

# Postpartum Depression

## What Is Postpartum Depression?

In the first few weeks of caring for a newborn, most new moms feel anxious, sad, frustrated, tired, and overwhelmed. Sometimes known as the "baby blues," these feelings get better within a few weeks. But for some women, they are very strong or don't get better. Postpartum depression is when these feelings don't go away after about 2 weeks or make it hard for a woman to take care of her baby.

**It's not anyone's fault or a weakness when a woman gets postpartum depression.** Postpartum depression is treatable. Treatment helps most women feel like themselves again. Then they can enjoy having a new baby at home.

## What Are the Signs & Symptoms of Postpartum Depression?

Symptoms of postpartum depression can vary from woman to woman. But common signs include:

- feeling sad, hopeless, or overwhelmed
- feeling worried, scared, or panicked
- blaming yourself unnecessarily
- crying a lot
- feeling moody
- anger
- sleeping too much or too little
- eating too much or too little
- trouble concentrating
- not wanting to be with friends and family
- not feeling attached to the baby
- not wanting to do things that usually are enjoyable

Although it is very rare, some women have very serious symptoms such as:

- thoughts of hurting the baby or themselves
- hearing voices, seeing things that are not there, or feeling paranoid (very worried, suspicious, or mistrustful)

## What Causes Postpartum Depression?

Postpartum depression is caused by a combination of:

- hormonal changes that happen after a baby is born
- changes such as the loss of sleep and increased stress that come with taking care of a newborn baby

## Who Gets Postpartum Depression?

Postpartum depression can affect any woman — but some may be more at risk for developing it. Women who have had any kind of depression in the past (including postpartum depression) or who have a family history of depression are more likely to get postpartum depression.

Other things that might increase the chance of postpartum depression include serious stress during the pregnancy, medical problems during the pregnancy or after birth, and lack of support at home.

## How Is Postpartum Depression Diagnosed?

A doctor or psychologist usually diagnosis a woman with postpartum depression based on her symptoms. Sometimes the woman herself notices the symptoms. Other times a concerned partner, spouse, family member, or friend notices the symptoms.

## How Is Postpartum Depression Treated?

Treatment for postpartum depression can vary. It might include:

- counseling
- improving self-care (getting enough sleep, eating well, exercising, and taking time to relax)
- getting more support by joining a group or talking (by phone or online) with others going through postpartum depression
- taking medicine. There are medicines that are safe to take while breastfeeding.

## Where Can I Get Help?

If you have symptoms of postpartum depression, get help right away. The sooner you get help, the sooner you will feel better. Start by talking to your health care provider (or your baby's). They can:

- Prescribe medicines to help you.
- Recommend that you see a psychologist, psychiatrist, or other mental health worker for treatment.
- Do blood tests to make sure something else isn't causing your symptoms.

If you don't have a health care provider, you can get help online at:

- Postpartum Support International: You also can call them at 1-800-944-4773 or text “Help” to 800-944-4773 (English) or 971-203-7773 (Spanish).

**If you are thinking about hurting yourself or your baby or if you hear or see things that aren't there, get help right away.**

You can:

- Go to the nearest emergency room.
- Contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call **1-800-273-8255** or text or call **988**. You also can contact them through their website.
- Contact the National Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 from anywhere in the U.S., anytime, about any type of crisis.

## Looking Ahead

Treatment works well for most women with postpartum depression. Within a few weeks, most women feel more like themselves and can start enjoying life's pleasures again.

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