



Postpartum Depression

What is it? Do I have it? What should I do about it?

More than feeling a bit down or overwhelmed by motherhood...

Having a new baby can be very overwhelming, even if it's not your first child. Pregnancy is associated with changes in hormones and very strong emotions, and many new mothers experience "baby blues." Baby blues include mood swings, crying spells, anxiety and difficulty sleeping. They usually start in the first 2 to 3 days after delivery and may last for up to two weeks. Baby blues usually pass with support from relatives and friends, and do not require the help of a specialist.

Postpartum depression is quite different, and involves a more severe and longer-lasting depression. It is sometimes called peripartum depression, because it can actually start while you are still pregnant, and persist after delivery.

Signs of Postpartum Depression

Depressed mood, mood swings, and/or very irritable mood that lasts for most of the day, and occurs on most or all days of the week. It can cause you to withdraw from relatives, friends, and even your baby. A

loss of interest in activities that you once enjoyed can also occur. A significant decrease in appetite, and being unable to sleep even when baby is sleeping are not uncommon. Some mothers may do the opposite, and sleep too much, not waking to respond to their baby's needs. Some mothers with postpartum depression report difficulty focusing on tasks, as well as feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, guilt or self-blame. Postpartum depression may be associated with significant feelings of anxiety, or panic attacks. Even more concerning are thoughts of harming yourself and/or harming your baby. These are very serious symptoms, and should be reported to your healthcare provider as soon as possible.

Getting help is important...

Postpartum depression is an illness, and needs to be treated. There is nothing to be ashamed of, and having it doesn't mean that you are a bad mother or a weak woman. It can be treated with talk therapy and/or medication. Left untreated, it can last for many months or even longer. It can prevent you from bonding with your baby, taking adequate care of yourself or your child, and can have long-term effects on your baby's growth and development. If you think that you are suffering from postpartum depression, talk to your nurse or doctor today. There are mental health services available at your clinic, so that you can get the help that you need.



Helping a friend or loved one...

Sometimes someone who is depressed may not recognise or admit that they need help. They may also be ashamed or afraid. If a friend or loved one is showing signs of postpartum depression, offer your support, and try to ensure that they get the help that they need. Do not wait and simply hope that it will go away on its own. Offer to go to the appointment with them, and let them know that you will support them through the process.

