

What is Postpartum Depression?

It is very common for moms to experience the “baby blues” – a two-week period where many new mothers experience mood instability, exhaustion, sleep problems, and crying. If the baby blues worsen or last longer than two weeks after delivery, you may be suffering from postpartum depression.

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a serious illness and a significant health concern. It is thought to be related to an imbalance of certain chemicals in the brain caused by hormonal changes after the delivery of a child and made worse by the stress of a major life change.

Research has shown that postpartum depression has significant risks for the child’s cognitive, social, and emotional development and can impact school readiness. In addition, depressive symptoms lead to difficulties in the mother-infant and father-mother relationships.

Approximately 10-15% of all new mothers develop symptoms consistent with a major depression in the postpartum period. Of these mothers, about half will continue to have symptoms that last greater than one year.

As many as 1 in 8 expectant and new moms will suffer from postpartum depression.



**OH BABY,
THIS ISN'T WHAT
I EXPECTED.**

When motherhood doesn't feel like you thought it would, you could be suffering from Postpartum Depression. You should know it is not your fault, and you can feel better. We're here to help.

ASK FOR HELP. DON'T GO IT ALONE.



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Why do I feel this way?

I should be happy but I'm so sad and tired. What's wrong with me? I can't take care of my baby. If these thoughts sound familiar, you are not alone. And there is help.

There is a possibility that you may be experiencing postpartum depression (PPD). PPD is a serious illness and significant health concern. It is thought to be related to an imbalance of certain chemicals in the brain caused by hormonal changes after the delivery of a child and made worse by the stress of a major life change.

Should I get help?

Yes, you should seek help. Help is available. Your depression is not likely to lift soon. Half of all mothers who develop postpartum depression continue to have significant symptoms when their baby turns 1-year-old.

Where can I get help? There are many people who can help you. Talk with your obstetrician, your baby's pediatrician, your family physician or general practitioner, and the office nurses. Inform them about how you're feeling and schedule an appointment to see your physician.

What will my doctor do? Your doctor will ask you questions about your mood and may request some blood tests to rule out medical conditions. She will discuss treating your depression through supportive talk therapy, medication, or a combination of both.

Additional things you can do:

- Ask the father, other family members, or friends for help with the baby and household chores like cooking, cleaning, and running errands. Do something for yourself like go for a walk, exercise, take a shower or hot bath, spend time with a friend, or play your favorite music.
- Take care of yourself. Eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep. The birth of the baby is stressful on mothers and fathers. Seek counseling for yourself if you experience depression or other emotional challenges

Why do women get postpartum depression?

The exact cause isn't known. Hormone levels change during pregnancy and right after childbirth. Those hormone changes may produce chemical changes in the brain that play a part in causing depression.

Feeling depressed doesn't mean that you're a bad person, or that you did something wrong or that you brought this on yourself.

How long does postpartum depression last?

It's hard to say. Some women feel better within a few weeks, but others feel depressed or "not themselves" for many months. Women who have more severe symptoms of depression or who have had depression in the past may take longer to get well. Just remember that help is available and that you can get better.

Signs of Postpartum Depression

- Frequent crying spells
- Feelings of sadness, anxiety, worthlessness, hopelessness
- Irritability
- Lack of energy to do everyday tasks
- Difficulty sleeping even when your baby is asleep
- Sense of stress that interferes with caring for yourself, the baby, or family
- Loss of interest in food or preoccupation with eating
- Loss of interest in caring for yourself
- Difficulty concentrating and remembering things
- Difficulty making decisions
- Loss of interest or pleasure in things you used to enjoy
- Excessive anxiety about the baby
- Lack of interest in the baby, feelings of detachment from the baby
- Fears of harming the baby
- Thoughts of harming or killing yourself
- Thoughts of harming the baby

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to inquire about

Kempe's program or visit

www.Kempe.org/ppd
for information.