

Ask yourself these questions:

- Are you feeling sad or depressed?
- Do you feel more irritable or angry with those around you?
- Are you having difficulty bonding with your baby?
- Do you feel anxious or panicky?
- Are you having problems eating or sleeping?
- Are you having upsetting thoughts that you can't get out of your mind?
- Do you feel as if you are "out of control" or "going crazy"?
- Do you feel like you never should have become a mother?
- Are you worried that you might hurt your baby or yourself?



Any of these symptoms, and many more, could indicate that you have a form of perinatal mood or anxiety disorder, such as postpartum depression. Please know that with informed care you can prevent a worsening of these symptoms and can fully recover. There is no reason to continue to suffer.

Women of every culture, age, income level and race and develop perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. Symptoms can appear any time during pregnancy and the first 12 months after childbirth. There are effective and well-researched treatment options to help you recover. Although the term "postpartum depression" is most often used, there are actually several forms of illness that women may experience during pregnancy or postpartum, including:

- **Depression** – feelings of anger, sadness, irritability, guilt, lack of interest in the baby, changes in eating and sleeping habits, trouble concentrating, hopeless thoughts or even thoughts of harming the baby or yourself.
- **Anxiety** – extreme worries and fears, often over the health and safety of the baby, panic attacks, chest pain, dizziness, and a feeling of losing control.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** – repetitive, upsetting and unwanted thoughts or mental images/obsessions, compulsion to do certain things over and over.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder** – often caused by a traumatic or frightening childbirth or past trauma, symptoms include flashbacks, feelings of anxiety and avoiding things related to the event.
- **Bipolar Mood Disorders** – phases of low time called depression and a high called mania or hypomania, can also appear as a severe depression
- **Psychosis** – sometimes see and hear voices or images called hallucinations, may believe things that are not true and distrust others, may have periods of confusion and memory loss; this severe condition is dangerous so it is important to seek help immediately.

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Frequently Asked Questions

- **What does perinatal mean?** Perinatal means “all around” birth or the time period throughout pregnancy as well as the baby’s first year.
- **How is this different than the “baby blues”?** Most new mothers (about 80%) experience mood swings and weepiness during the first 2-3 weeks after giving birth. These “baby blues” are a normal adjustment period and resolve without any medical assistance.
- **Why is it difficult to recognize or admit to perinatal depression or anxiety?** A new mother might not recognize the symptoms because she is tired, overwhelmed or simply adjusting to life with a baby. It is hard to know what normal mom stuff is and what is a symptom of depression or anxiety. They are afraid of complaining or not being able to handle motherhood. Moms and their families might feel ashamed or embarrassed. They fear admitting to negative feelings may lead to their children being taken away or being labeled as bad mothers.
- **What should a mom do if she thinks she has perinatal depression or anxiety?** She should reach out as soon as she can and talk to supportive and informed people. She should start by talking to her care provider. Admitting there may be a problem is the most important step a mother can take for herself and her family.
- **What kind of treatment will help?** Treatment plans are different for each woman, but might include increased self-care, social support, talk therapy or counseling, and treatment of symptoms, with medication when necessary. Some women treat depression and anxiety with medication, some with natural remedies, some with diet and exercise, some with counseling, support groups, or spiritual practice and support. Many use all of them. Find what works best for you, make a plan of self-care, and stick to it. Learn about how to cope with depression and anxiety, and reach out to informed providers until you find the help you need.

Source: www.postpartum.net

What should I do if I need help right away?

If you need immediate help, please contact the national emergency services listed below. They are available all the time. It is very important that you reach out right now and find the support and information you need to be safe.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline and Website

1-800-273-8255

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

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