



POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION | The Basics

Most new mothers experience some degree of moodiness and anxiety after giving birth. For many women, these “baby blues” disappear within the first 14 days following childbirth; however, for some women, these feelings can last for weeks, months, and even years. When these sad feelings persist for over two weeks, it is known as postpartum depression.

What is postpartum depression?

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a mood disorder that affects 10–20% of new mothers. Women with postpartum depression often feel sad, anxious, and alone. They may feel extremely overwhelmed by the demands of motherhood, and they may be unable to find joy in caring for their babies. It is important to remember that postpartum depression is never the woman’s fault. Having postpartum depression does not make anyone a bad mother. Postpartum depression can be treated successfully.

What are the symptoms of postpartum depression?

Symptoms of postpartum depression include:

- Sadness
- Frequent crying
- Anxiety/panic
- Guilt
- Irritability
- Feelings of emptiness, hopelessness, worthlessness and/or inadequacy
- Feeling helpless and/or overwhelmed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue or lack of energy
- Lack of interest in what were once enjoyable activities
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Eating too little or too much
- Loss of interest in sex
- Thoughts about harming the baby
- Thoughts about death or suicide

These symptoms usually appear within 24 hours to a few months after giving birth and last for two weeks or more.

What should I do if I think I have postpartum depression?

If you think you may have postpartum depression, it is important to talk with your doctor as soon as possible about symptoms and treatment options. Ask your family and friends for emotional support or help in caring for your baby. Keep your body healthy—go outside for some exercise and fresh air (even if you don’t feel like moving) and eat nutritious foods (even if you don’t feel hungry). Try to get enough rest, either by sleeping or just lying down and relaxing.

How can postpartum depression be treated?

The following treatment options have been shown to be effective in lessening the symptoms of postpartum depression:

- Individual or group therapy
- Medication prescribed by a doctor

These may be used alone or in combination with other treatment options.

- Support from family, friends, and community is also very important in helping women recover from postpartum depression

Will I ever get over this?

Yes! With proper treatment, most women are able to overcome postpartum depression and lead healthy, normal lives.

