

# POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AND OTHER MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES



Postpartum depression (also called PPD) is a medical condition that many women get after having a baby. It's strong feelings of sadness, anxiety (worry) and tiredness that last for a long time after giving birth.

Postpartum depression is a common and treatable condition that should be taken seriously along with other mental health challenges, by healthcare providers and loved ones alike. All parents including fathers, partners, and adoptive parents can experience changes in mood when there is a new baby in the household. This is even more relevant when the parent's new baby has a birth defect or other reasons for a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) stay.

## KEY FACTS AND STATISTICS

1 IN 8 WOMEN



REPORT SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION AFTER GIVING BIRTH

PDD feelings are more intense and last longer than those of "baby blues," a term used to describe the worry, sadness, and tiredness many women experience after having a baby.

20%

About 1 in 5 women were not asked about depression during a prenatal visit, so it is important to tell your healthcare provider how you feel.

ABOUT

3%

OF ALL BABIES BORN IN THE U.S. ARE BORN WITH A BIRTH DEFECT

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

The signs and symptoms of postpartum depression may be physical, but it could also include feelings of sadness, anxiety, and exhaustion that make it difficult to complete daily care activities for yourself, your baby or others.



Depressed most of the day every day



Severe mood swings



Shame, guilt or feeling like a failure



Panicked or scared a lot of the time



Trouble bonding with your baby



Thinking about hurting yourself or your baby



Little interest in things you normally like to do



Tired all the time



Eating a lot more or a lot less than is normal for you



Trouble concentrating or making decisions



Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much



Gaining or losing weight

## KNOW YOUR RISKS



The risk of postpartum depression is higher for women with a history of mental health conditions or who have experienced depression or anxiety during pregnancy.

Untreated postpartum depression can have long-term effects on both the mother and child.

If you think you have symptoms of PPD call your provider right away. If you or your family/friends are worried about your safety, or think you might hurt yourself or your baby, call your provider or emergency services at 911 right away.

### Options for getting free and confidential emotional support include:

- **National Alliance on Mental Illness:**  
1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
- **National Maternal Health Hotline:**  
1-833-TLC-MAMA (6262)
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- **Postpartum Support International Helpline:**  
1-800-944-4773

Women at increased risk of maternal mental health conditions are those who:

- have a personal or family history of mental health conditions
- lack social support, especially from their partner
- experienced a traumatic birth or previous trauma in their lives
- experienced complications during pregnancy, like having a baby with a birth defect or having a [pregnancy loss](#)
- have a baby in the NICU

## MANAGING DEPRESSION

Your healthcare provider may recommend:

- **Counseling**
- **Support groups to connect with** people who share their feelings and experiences
- **Medicine** such as antidepressants



If you are pregnant or gave birth within the last year, it's important to talk to your healthcare provider about anything that doesn't feel right.



Support from family and friends can be beneficial in helping to manage symptoms of postpartum depression.



Exercise, self-care, and getting enough sleep can also be helpful in managing postpartum depression.

## RESOURCES

**Postpartum Depression Overview:**

<https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/postpartum/postpartum-depression>

**CDC Hear Her Campaign:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/hearher/maternal-warning-signs/index.html>