

# Pregnancy and Postpartum Depression and Anxiety

Life with a new baby can be fun and rewarding, but it can also be stressful.

During pregnancy and in the first few days right after childbirth, there may be times when you:



Cry for no reason



Feel depressed, sad, or lonely



Feel anxious or restless



Feel irritable or angry for no reason



Have trouble sleeping or eating

These feelings may come and go. One minute you may feel happy, and the next you may be crying. Most new mothers have these feelings, which are sometimes called the “baby blues.” They can be caused by changing hormones, fatigue, and the demands of caring for a new baby. New mothers often start to feel better after they get some rest and help with the baby.

These ups and downs are a normal part of being a new parent. However, there is a difference between the “baby blues,” which pass on their own, and postpartum depression and anxiety, a more serious condition. The good news is that



postpartum depression and anxiety can be diagnosed and treated. Your doctor can help you feel better and get back to enjoying your new baby.

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**It's important to identify depression and anxiety early on. If you have these feelings during pregnancy, working with your care team can help soften or avoid postpartum depression and anxiety after childbirth.**

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## What are the signs of postpartum depression and anxiety?

- Feeling sad or hopeless and losing interest in daily activities
- Crying often
- Feeling restless, irritable, on edge, or keyed up
- Having excessive anxiety or worry
- Feeling overwhelmed, worthless, or guilty

- Having trouble falling asleep or sleeping too much
- Eating too much or too little
- Having trouble focusing, remembering, or making decisions; feeling like your mind goes blank
- Headaches, aches and pains, or stomach problems that do not go away
- Fearing that something bad is going to happen or feeling doomed
- Having scary, graphic, or intrusive thoughts
- Worrying that you may harm your baby or yourself

If these signs last **more than 2 to 3 weeks** or feel overwhelming, ask your doctor for help.

**If you are having thoughts of hurting yourself, your baby, or anyone else, see your doctor right away or call 911 for emergency medical care.**

## Who is at risk for postpartum depression and anxiety?

Postpartum depression and anxiety can affect anyone, including partners. About 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men will experience postpartum depression and anxiety after having a baby. Symptoms typically begin 2 to 3 weeks after the baby is born, but they can begin anytime, including during pregnancy, after a miscarriage, or even when you stop breastfeeding.

It is more likely to happen if you have had:

- ✓ Postpartum depression and/or anxiety in the past
- ✓ Depression and/or anxiety during pregnancy
- ✓ A history or family history of depression or anxiety
- ✓ A history of trauma
- ✓ Troubled relationships with your partner, family, or friends
- ✓ A recent stressful event, such as a divorce or separation, marriage, job change, or financial problems



- ✓ A history of infertility
- ✓ A complicated pregnancy
- ✓ A difficult or traumatic delivery experience
- ✓ Struggles with breastfeeding
- ✓ Pregnancy loss

## What treatments are available?

Depression and anxiety during and after pregnancy can be treated successfully, much like other types of depression and anxiety. The most common treatments are therapy or counseling and medication combined with self-care. There are medications that are felt to be safe to use during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Talk to your doctor about the treatment that is best for you.



For more information about the safety of antidepressants/antianxiety medications during pregnancy and breastfeeding visit [mothertobaby.org](https://mothertobaby.org).

## Self-care strategies

Taking care of yourself after the birth of your baby is very important. It can help you feel better right away.



**Rest as much as you can.** Sleep while the baby naps. Try not to let visitors keep you from getting the sleep you need. Turn off the phone and put a sign on the door when you are napping.



**Take good care of your body.** Go outdoors for a walk with the baby, eat healthy foods, and drink plenty of water.



**Ask for help.** Have family and friends help you with household chores and errands.



**Spend time doing something you enjoy** with your partner or a close friend.



**Talk with friends**, especially other new parents, about the challenges of being a parent.



**Go to a support group** for new parents.

**Mindful Mamas** is a 4-session, online program that teaches mindfulness skills that help you accept your thoughts and feelings without being overwhelmed by them. Offered by the Positive Choice Wellness Center. Find more information and how to schedule here: [PositiveChoice.org/mamas](https://PositiveChoice.org/mamas)

## How others can help

Everyone needs help and support after the birth of a baby. Ask your partner, family, and friends to:

- ✓ Listen when you need to talk
- ✓ Help with cooking, shopping, cleaning, and other household chores and errands
- ✓ Help care for the baby
- ✓ Give you some time alone each day to sleep, bathe, exercise, read, or relax

## Where to get more help

- Find mental health and wellness information from Kaiser Permanente at [kp.org/mentalhealth](https://kp.org/mentalhealth).
- Search for “postpartum depression” at [kp.org](https://kp.org).
- Contact the Office on Women’s Health (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services) at [womenshealth.gov](https://womenshealth.gov) or **1-800-994-9662**.
- Get more information on postpartum depression, online support groups, and other resources at [postpartum.net](https://postpartum.net).

