

# Baby blues or postpartum depression?



**Having a baby is usually considered a time of joy, but many women feel “down” or “blue” after giving birth. Some women may even feel extremely sad.**

These feelings may be particularly upsetting for a mother who believes this should be a happy time. She may also think that others, including family members, are judging her negatively for having these feelings. Usually, these feelings are mild and pass within a few days or weeks. But they can be more serious for about 1 in 8 new moms. In fact, postpartum depression is one of the most common complications of having a child. Having emotional support from family and other friends is crucial during this time. In addition, new mothers can benefit from the assistance of people who can cook, clean the house, do the laundry, run errands and take care of other children in the family during the postpartum period. Postpartum depression is very treatable with many options from which to choose. Routine screening is recommended with early intervention in both perinatal and postpartum periods.

## **How do baby blues and postpartum depression differ?**

Postpartum blues, also known as the baby blues, is characterized as mild sadness, and may include feelings of anxiety, tearfulness, irritability, difficulty sleeping, and trouble eating and drinking the fluids needed for successful breastfeeding. It may last from a few days to two weeks.

Postpartum depression is more severe and makes it difficult for a new mom to function. It lasts longer than two weeks and,

if untreated, can last for many months. Women with postpartum depression have symptoms that may include deep sadness, feelings of anxiety or being overwhelmed, sleep and appetite changes, and a feeling of hopelessness. They may believe they are all alone with their feelings and wonder if they will ever feel normal again. They may withdraw from their partner, who could be a good source of support during this time.

## **OTHER SYMPTOMS that maybe experienced with postpartum depression**

- ▶ Withdrawal or lack of concern for self or the baby
- ▶ Social isolation
- ▶ Mood swings
- ▶ Irritability
- ▶ Difficulty sleeping or eating
- ▶ A sense of guilt or worthlessness
- ▶ Thoughts of harming the baby or their self \*



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## What should you do if you think you have postpartum depression?

Postpartum depression can affect the health and well-being of both mom and child as well as the entire family. If you have any postpartum depression symptoms, or you think you might be depressed, it is very important that you do not delay talking openly and honestly with your health care provider. Your doctor may administer the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) survey to help identify whether or not you are likely to have the condition. It takes only five minutes to complete the 10-question survey. Your doctor may also perform a more formal evaluation. If indicated, your doctor will make treatment recommendations which may

include medications, counseling/talk therapy or participation in a reputable community- or hospital-based support group. Your health care provider may also recommend seeing a mental health professional with expertise with this condition.

It's also important to acknowledge that postpartum depression can affect your significant other, and it can potentially affect the long-term health of the baby if you are not able to bond with the baby.

For more information on postpartum depression, please visit The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists website at [ACOG.org](http://ACOG.org).



**\*If you are having thoughts of harming yourself, your baby or others, seek immediate help.**

**\*\*If you feel there is an immediate danger, call 911 right away.**

**To talk with a trained counselor, you can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. This crisis center is available 24 hours a day.**

**ENGLISH: 800-273-TALK (8255)**

**SPANISH: 888-628-9454**

**HEARING AND SPEECH IMPAIRED - TTY EQUIPMENT:**

**800-799-4889 or 800-799-4TTY**

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Sources: HelpGuide.org, Post-Partum Depression and the Baby Blues ([postpartum-depression-and-the-baby-blues.htm](#)), The Edinburgh Postpartum Depression Survey ([misc/edinburghscale.pdf](#)), The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), ACOG Statement on Depression Screening (Room/Statements/2015/ACOG-Statement-on-Depression-Screening), Women's Health.org, Depression During and After Pregnancy

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