

# Postpartum Mood and Anxiety Disorders

## Baby Blues

The baby blues are common to many women after giving birth, and usually fade away on their own. They last a few days to a week or two and may include:

- Mood swings
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Irritability
- Crying
- Decreased concentration
- Trouble sleeping

## Postpartum Depression and Anxiety

Postpartum depression and anxiety are more serious and longer lasting. Symptoms include:

### Postpartum anxiety

- Constant and/or irrational worries that you can't dismiss
- Panic attacks (physical symptoms like rapid heartbeat, dizziness, nausea, sweating)
- Insomnia
- Racing thoughts
- Avoidance of feared activities (driving with the baby, etc.)
- Restlessness or a feeling of being "edgy"
- Difficulty concentrating

### Postpartum depression

- Loss of appetite
- Insomnia
- Intense irritability and anger
- Overwhelming fatigue
- Loss of interest in sex
- Lack of joy in life
- Feelings of shame, guilt or inadequacy
- Severe mood swings
- Difficulty bonding with your baby
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

## When to See a Doctor or Therapist

If you're feeling depressed or anxious after your baby's birth, you may be reluctant or embarrassed to admit it. But it's important to call your doctor or a therapist if the signs and symptoms of depression or anxiety:

- Are getting worse
- Don't fade after two to three weeks
- Make it hard for you to care for your baby
- Make it difficult to complete everyday tasks
- Include thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

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## Postpartum Mood and Anxiety Disorders (cont.)

### What You Can Do if You're Experiencing Postpartum Depression or Anxiety

**Take care of yourself** – This can be difficult with a baby's needs to consider! Basic steps like making sure to brush your teeth every day and shower when you can, getting proper nutrition, and getting as much night-time sleep as you can (it's not always realistic to "sleep when the baby sleeps" during the day) will help you feel better and remind you that you are a valuable person worth taking care of.

**Move around** – Get a little exercise each day, and try to get outdoors. Even if it's just a few minutes of walking in the fresh air with your baby, movement and nature revive our minds, bodies, and spirits.

**Talk to yourself** – Depression and Anxiety are bad friends. They tell us that everything is NOT OK and that they are smarter than we are. So talk to yourself louder than Depression or Anxiety. Use positive affirmations and supportive self-talk. You do not have to be perfect! Good enough is good enough.

**Connect** – When we're feeling bad we tend to isolate ourselves and withdraw from loved ones. Reaching out to people who care about you helps counteract these feelings and gets you much-needed support. A phone call, an email, or a visit can raise your mood. Make sure to choose supportive people who understand what you're going through. If you feel like you have no one to talk to, call a hotline. Hotlines are a free service for anyone experiencing depression, anxiety, grief, loneliness, or general hard times. Several hotlines are listed below.

**Get help** – Seek help from a trained professional or others who have been where you are. A psychotherapist and/or support group can help you work through your thoughts and feelings and adjust to this exciting, terrifying, exhausting, life-changing new phase of your journey. A doctor can prescribe medications that may help. You are not alone! Don't struggle through this all by yourself.

### Resources

- Postpartum Support International: 1-800-944-4PPD, [www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net)
- The Santa Clara County Suicide and Crisis Hotline: 1-855-278-4204
- *Beyond the Blues, Understanding and Treating Prenatal and Postpartum Depression & Anxiety* by Shoshana Bennett and Pec Indman
- *Mindful Motherhood: Practical Tools for Staying Sane During Pregnancy and Your Child's First Year* by Cassandra Vieten
- *The Pregnancy and Postpartum Anxiety Workbook: Practical Skills to Help You Overcome Anxiety, Worry, Panic Attacks, Obsessions, and Compulsions* by Pamela Wiegartz and Kevin L. Gyoerkoe

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