



Postpartum Depression

Women who experience the baby blues are at an increased risk of developing postpartum depression. The condition is characterized by more intense feelings of sadness, despair, anxiety and irritability.

What is postpartum depression?

Having a baby can be one of the happiest and most important events in a woman's life. While life with a new baby can be thrilling and rewarding, it also can be hard and stressful at times. Many new moms experience the baby blues – a mild, brief bout of depression – for a few days or weeks after giving birth. However, 10 percent to 20 percent of new moms will experience a more severe form of depression – known as postpartum or perinatal depression – that can interfere with daily life. Some women may develop postpartum psychosis, a rare but severe illness.

Women who experience the baby blues are at an increased risk of developing postpartum depression. The condition is characterized by more intense feelings of sadness, despair, anxiety and irritability. The symptoms are longer lasting and may occur anytime within the first year. It often affects a woman's ability to function, and without medical attention, the symptoms may worsen.

What are the signs of postpartum depression?

The following symptoms, especially if they linger or get worse, could signal that you have more than just the baby blues:

- Restlessness, anger or irritability
- Sadness, feel like crying a lot
- Worthlessness or guilt
- Fear of hurting your baby or yourself
- Overly worried about the baby or not concerned about the baby at all
- Little or no energy
- Headaches, chest pains, rapid heartbeat, numbness or tingling in the hands or feet, or fast and shallow breathing
- Trouble sleeping well
- Poor eating habits
- Trouble focusing, remembering or making decisions
- Little interest in things you used to enjoy, including sex

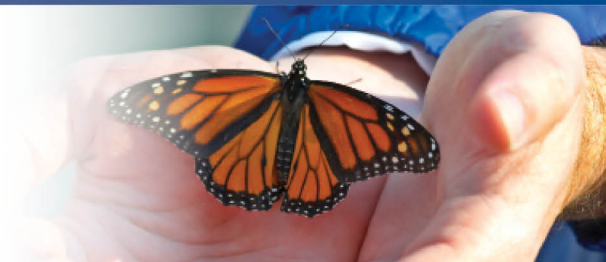
What causes postpartum depression?

There is no single cause for postpartum depression. Physical, emotional and lifestyle factors all may play a role. Depression also runs in some families.

Who gets postpartum depression?

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Any woman who is pregnant, had a baby within the past several months, miscarried, recently weaned a child from breast feeding, or adopted a child can suffer from postpartum depression, regardless of how many previously non-complicated pregnancies and postpartum adjustments she has had. A woman may experience this regardless of her age, socioeconomic status, and number of children she has borne.

What is the treatment for postpartum depression?

Postpartum depression is treated much like other types of depression. Support, counseling ("talk therapy") and medications can help. Treatment depends on the nature and severity of the postpartum depression and it is important to recognize that it is both temporary and treatable.



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