

Postpartum Mental Health

Adjusting to life with a new baby can be really hard and overwhelming. If you're having a tough time, you're not alone! It's very common to have a low mood or feel overwhelmed by your emotions after giving birth, due to hormonal changes and the challenges of caring for a new baby.

- Up to 85% of new moms experience the **baby blues**, which are intense mood swings in the first couple weeks after giving birth.
- Up to 15% of new moms experience **postpartum mood disorders**, which are more intense, longer-lasting mood changes that interfere with everyday living.

Signs of baby blues

- Mood swings
- Irritability
- Feeling sad or hopeless
- Fatigue
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Crying
- Worrying a lot
- Trouble sleeping

Signs of a mood disorder

Symptoms could include all the signs of baby blues, as well as:

- Constant worry or racing thoughts
- Not feeling connected or concerned with life
- Feelings of guilt, shame or hopelessness
- Scary or unwanted thoughts
- Difficulty bonding with your baby
- Feelings of anger or rage
- Loss of interest in tasks like bathing or getting dressed
- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in appetite
- Thoughts of harming your baby or yourself

If you think you may have a postpartum mood disorder, or you've been struggling with your mood for at least 2 weeks, please talk to your doctor or midwife about what you've been feeling. **If you ever have thoughts of suicide or self-harm, reach out to your doctor/midwife right away or call 988.**

Tips for getting through the newborn phase

- Open up to trusted friends and loved ones about how you're really feeling.
- Plan to have extra support for day-to-day tasks so you can focus on your baby and recovery.
- Set realistic expectations of yourself and of your newborn. You're both learning!
- Prioritize self-care by eating well, staying hydrated, and resting.
- Let go of the idea of perfection – there's no one right way to parent.
- Know that you're not alone! It's ok to ask for help.

Types of postpartum mood disorders

- **Depression:** A severe, persistent sadness and hopelessness that affects daily functioning
- **Anxiety:** Constant worry and panic attacks that make it hard to care for yourself or your baby
- **OCD:** Intrusive, distressing thoughts and compulsive behaviors aimed at preventing harm to the baby
- **PTSD:** Flashbacks, nightmares, and emotional distress after a traumatic birth experience.
- **Bipolar Disorder:** Extreme mood swings between very high energy (mania) and deep sadness (depression)
- **Psychosis:** A rare but serious condition with hallucinations and false beliefs, often involving thoughts of harming yourself or the baby. This requires immediate medical attention.

National Resources

If you ever need urgent support over the phone, reach out to one of these resources:

- **988:** Call or text 988 for mental health or crisis support
- **National Maternal Mental Health Hotline:** Call or text 833-852-6262 for support
- **Postpartum Support International:** Call or text HelpLine at 800-944-4773 (not available 24/7)