

Introduction

Pregnancy and childbirth are important changes in a woman's life. But they can also be very stressful for some women. There is help available in the community to help pregnant and postpartum women adjust to these changes.

Approximately half a million mothers in the US experience what is called postpartum depression each year.

The majority of women experience the “baby blues” after giving birth

Eight out of 10 women feel tearful and have mood swings after giving birth. One minute they feel happy, the next minute they start to cry for no reason. These symptoms are usually normal during early motherhood. These feelings usually start by the third or fourth day after delivery and should go away within two weeks. Some women may have worse symptoms or the symptoms may last longer. This is called postpartum depression.



What is postpartum depression?

It is an illness that develops approximately two weeks after the birth of a baby. It is a **serious condition** that can affect a woman's ability to function as a new mother. Two out of 10 women experience this illness. It can last months or sometimes years if it is not treated in time.

What are the symptoms of postpartum depression?

Symptoms last longer and are more severe than the “baby blues.” If you are **experiencing any of the following symptoms** during pregnancy or after giving birth, **you should talk to your health care provider or a person you trust as soon as possible:**

- ☐ Loss of appetite
- ☐ Loss of interest or pleasure in life
- ☐ Problems with falling asleep or staying asleep even while the baby sleeps
- ☐ Sleeping more than usual
- ☐ Crying for no apparent reason
- ☐ Lack of energy and motivation to do things
- ☐ Difficulty with concentration or making decisions
- ☐ Feeling restless, irritable, anxious or “on edge”
- ☐ Feeling worthless, hopeless, or helpless
- ☐ Feelings of not being a good mother
- ☐ Feelings of disinterest or being overprotective toward the baby
- ☐ Having thoughts about hurting yourself or the baby

What causes postpartum depression?

There can be multiple causes or reasons why women develop postpartum depression. However the exact cause is not known.

What are some risk factors?

- ☐ Hormonal changes after giving birth
- ☐ Previous history of postpartum depression
- ☐ Pregnancy loss
- ☐ Unwanted pregnancy
- ☐ Prenatal anxiety/depression

- ☐ Stressful life events during pregnancy or after childbirth (domestic violence, relocation, divorce, problems with partner)
- ☐ Lack of support from family and friends
- ☐ Previous history of depression not related to pregnancy or childbirth
- ☐ Infant temperament (baby difficult to calm down)
- ☐ First time mother or teen mother



What can you do to help yourself?

- ☐ Talk to your health care provider, or a person you trust, about your feelings during pregnancy and after delivery
- ☐ Attend support groups for pregnant and new moms
- ☐ Ask friends and family to help you with household chores, child care, and errands
- ☐ Keep phone numbers available for agencies in the community that offer support groups and counseling
- ☐ Practice self-care activities (walking, sleep and eat well, play or read with your other children)
- ☐ If possible, exercise every day
- ☐ Taking care of a newborn can be demanding; **ask for help** when things seem too overwhelming

Family needs and postpartum depression

If not treated in time, postpartum depression may have serious consequences. Some studies have shown that children of depressed mothers may have developmental and language delays.

Available treatments

If you believe you suffer from postpartum depression, it is important that you talk with your healthcare provider. Individual or group counseling therapy used along with medications has proven to be the most effective treatment for postpartum depression.



What is Postpartum Psychosis?

This is a more severe but a much less common type of postpartum illness (one to two cases per 1,000 births). It can strike a woman **very soon after the birth of a child, often during the first 48 to 74 hours after delivery.** The woman may experience extreme mood swings, disorganized, irrational behavior, hallucinations or delusions. Postpartum psychosis is a **MEDICAL EMERGENCY** that requires **immediate medical attention** of the mother because of the immediate risk of self-harm or hurting the baby.



RESOURCES

Postpartum Health Alliance	(310) 915-7028
Los Angeles	
Center for Postpartum Health	(818) 887-1312
Depression after Delivery	(800) 944-4773
Postpartum Support International	(805) 967-7636
National Institute of Mental Health	(800) 421-4211

Orange County

OCHCA Behavioral Health Services

Aliso Viejo	(949) 643-6900
Anaheim	(714) 517-6300
Costa Mesa	(714) 850-8463
Fullerton	(714) 447-7000
Laguna Beach	(949) 499-1877
Santa Ana	(714) 480-6767
Westminster	(714) 896-7566
Emergency Treatment Services (ETS)	(714) 834-6900

Postpartum Adjustment Support Group	(949) 365-2144
Mission Viejo, Tuesdays 10 AM-11 AM	

Other Support Groups/Counseling

MOMS Family Resource Center	(800) 787-5858
Turning Point	(714) 547-8111
Latino Psychological Services	(714) 834-0757
Human Options	(949) 737-5242
Catholic Charities	(714) 542-7347
Mariposa Women's Center	(714) 547-6494
Families Costa Mesa FRC	(949) 574-3970
FACES	(714) 547-7345
CHEC FRC	(949) 661-5221
Center of Hope	(714) 898-8155

The information in this pamphlet is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace seeing a healthcare provider.

Postpartum DEPRESSION



What
YOU
Should
Know

An Educational Pamphlet for
Pregnant and Postpartum Women



Orange County Health Care Agency
Public Health Field Nursing