

Postpartum Depression & Anxiety:

What New Moms and Their Families Need to Know

You just had a baby - congratulations! During the time when moms are still recovering from childbirth, they will probably be very busy taking care of the baby. It is a big job, and it is often hard for them to remember to take care of themselves too!

Many moms feel a little emotional or teary in the days after birth; those feelings are very common and usually go away within a week. But if they feel especially sad or anxious or are not interested in taking care of the baby for more than two weeks, they may have a medical condition called **Postpartum Depression or Anxiety**. These conditions are common, with about 1 out of 5 to 7 new moms being affected, and can occur during pregnancy, after birth, or later in the two years after birth. Post-adoption depression can occur, and dads or partners can develop these conditions as well, though much less frequently.

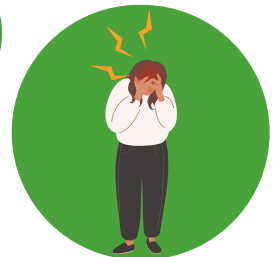
Signs of Postpartum Depression:



- Feel sad and cry a lot or sleep all the time
- Don't feel like being with the baby or feel like a failure as a mother
- Lose interest in things that they used to love to do
- Start or increase the use of alcohol or drugs to try to feel better
- Feel so bad that they feel like hurting themselves or the baby

Signs of Postpartum Anxiety:

- Constant worry that something bad will happen to the baby
- Have panic attacks or physical complaints that feel real in their body
- Being afraid to ever leave the baby or have someone else touch the baby
- Have their mind get stuck on things, have bad thoughts that won't go away, or check things they do repeatedly
- Relive their recent traumatic birth repeatedly in their minds



Other Reasons to Seek Help:



If a parent has feelings that they may hurt themselves or the baby, they should dial 911 and follow their directions to get immediately to an Emergency Room



If a new mom has superhuman amounts of energy with no need for sleep or rest, sometimes leading to confusion or wild behavior, or if they hear special messages from a higher power or voices in their mind, they should seek **immediate** help.

How to Get Help with Postpartum Mental Health Conditions:



It is crucial for moms to get help when they have signs of one of these conditions. They should immediately call or see the medical person who is following them after their birth. This is usually their OB or follow up nurse, or the baby's pediatrician during visits. Do not put off seeking help.

The good news is that these medical conditions have effective treatments that will not harm the baby. You can feel better and be back to enjoying your baby with help.

What Families Can Do to Care for A Mom with Postpartum Depression/Anxiety:

Once your loved one is in the care of a medical clinician for their condition, there are some things families can do to help her:

Reassure

her that struggling with her mental health does not mean she's a bad mother. Encourage her to go for her follow up care.

Encourage "me time" and self-care

as it's one of the best ways she can care for her baby.



Ask

how you can best help, whether through childcare, cooking, cleaning, laundry, or errands – and follow through.

Follow up

on your initial contacts to offer help going forward. Supporting a new mother through a postpartum mental health condition may require patience, understanding, and a supportive community.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, hotlines are available for 24/7 confidential support.

National Crisis Line – Call or text **988** or visit **988lifeline.org**

Maternal Mental Health Hotline – Call **833-TLC-MAMA**

Find more resources at mentalhealthcareworks.org

This resource was written and reviewed by Maureen Sayres Van Niel, M. D.