

Depression During and After Pregnancy: When It's More Than the Baby Blues

What is peripartum depression?

Around the time you have a baby, you might have normal mood changes. This can last for up to 10 days. It is called baby blues. Sometimes, it is more severe and lasts longer. This is called peripartum depression.

Many new mothers with peripartum depression feel better within a few weeks. Sometimes, it takes longer to feel better and treatment is needed. This is more likely in mothers who have more severe symptoms or who have had depression before.

What are the symptoms?

Your doctor may ask you to fill out a survey to see if you are having any symptoms of peripartum depression. Symptoms include:

- Sadness, anxiety, and crying
- Feeling scared and overwhelmed
- Blaming yourself for things that aren't your fault
- Losing interest in things that you've always enjoyed
- Some women have thoughts of harming their babies; although these thoughts are scary, they aren't the mother's fault and don't reflect how she actually feels about her baby

Will I always feel like this?

Sometimes therapy or medicine is needed, but almost all women eventually feel better.

What can I do to help myself feel better?

Eat a healthy diet, exercise, and sleep when you can. Take walks outside with your baby. Most importantly, if you notice any of the symptoms mentioned above, tell your doctor right away.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/postpartum-depression.html>

American Psychological Association

<http://www.apa.org/pi/women/resources/reports/postpartum-dep.aspx>

National Institute of Mental Health

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/postpartum-depression-facts/index.shtml>

Postpartum Support International

<http://www.postpartum.net/>

U.S. National Library of Medicine

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/postpartumdepression.html>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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