

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

What is peripartum depression?

Shortly before, during, and after you have a baby, you might have normal mood changes. These can last for up to 10 days. They are called the baby blues. Sometimes, the mood changes are more severe and last longer. They are called peripartum depression.

Many new parents 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 parents who have more severe symptoms or who have had depression before.

What are the symptoms?

Your doctor may ask you questions to see whether 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 parents may have thoughts of harming their baby; although these thoughts can feel scary, they aren't the parent's fault and don't reflect how they actually feel about their baby

Will I always feel like this?

Sometimes therapy or medicine is needed to help parents 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. If you notice any of the symptoms listed here, tell your doctor right away.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

American Psychological Association

<https://www.apa.org/topics/women-girls/postpartum-depression>

National Institute of Mental Health

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

National Library of Medicine

<https://medlineplus.gov/postpartumdepression.html>

Postpartum Support International

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

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