

# POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a complex mix of physical, emotional, and behavioral changes that happen in some women after giving birth. According to the DSM-5, a manual used to diagnose mental disorders, PPD is a form of major depression that begins within 4 weeks after delivery. The diagnosis of postpartum depression is based not only on the length of time between delivery and onset but on the severity of the depression.

Postpartum depression is linked to chemical, social, and psychological changes that happen when having a baby. The term describes a range of physical and emotional changes that many new mothers experience.

## SYMPTOMS

- Depressed mood or severe mood swings
  - Excessive crying
  - Difficulty bonding with baby
  - Withdrawing from family and friends
  - Loss or increased appetite
  - Insomnia or sleeping too much
  - Reduced interest and pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
  - Intense irritability and anger
  - Fear that you're not a good mother
  - Hopelessness & Restlessness
  - Diminished ability to think clearly, concentrate or make decisions
  - Severe anxiety and panic attacks
  - Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- Untreated, postpartum depression may last for many months or longer.

## RISK FACTORS

- A history of depression prior to becoming pregnant, or during pregnancy
- Age at time of pregnancy (the younger you are, the higher the chances)
- Ambivalence about the pregnancy
- Children (the more you have, the more likely you are to be depressed in a later pregnancy)
- Family history of mood disorders
- Going through an extremely stressful event, like a job loss or health crisis
- Having a child with special needs or health problems

## TYPES OF POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

1. The **baby blues** happen to as many as 70% of women in the days right after childbirth. You may have sudden mood swings, such as feeling very happy and then feeling very sad. The baby blues may last only a few hours or as long as 1 to 2 weeks after delivery. No medical treatment is necessary. Joining a new mom support group helps.
2. **Postpartum Depression (PPD)** can happen a few days or even months after childbirth. PPD can happen after the birth of any child, not just the first child. You can have feelings similar to the baby blues -- sadness, despair, anxiety, crankiness -- but you feel them much more strongly. PPD often keeps you from doing the things you need to do every day. Medical treatment & counseling is necessary, or else symptoms may worsen.
3. **Postpartum Psychosis** is a very serious mental illness that can affect new mothers. This illness can happen quickly, often within the first 3 months after childbirth. Women can lose touch with reality, having auditory hallucinations (hearing things that aren't actually happening, like a person talking) and delusions (strongly believing things that are clearly irrational). Medical treatment & counseling is necessary, or else symptoms may worsen. Sometimes women are put into the hospital because they are at risk of hurting themselves or someone else.

## TREATMENT

- Anti-anxiety/antidepressant, Medications, Psychotherapy, Participation in a Support Group, Education
- In severe cases: Brexanolone (Zulresso) may be prescribed
- Postpartum psychosis: drugs for treating psychosis are usually added & hospital admission

## PREVENTION

- If you have a history of depression, tell your doctor as soon as you find out you're pregnant, or if you're planning to become pregnant
  - Monitoring of symptoms, Support groups/Counseling/Therapies, Prescribed Medications during pregnancy, Treatment may be recommended as soon as the baby is born
- Early postpartum checkup
- Cope with bringing home a newborn by asking for help, being realistic about your expectations for yourself and the baby, exercising, balancing your diet, not isolating yourself, and getting good sleep & rest



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References:  
• <https://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/postpartum-depression>  
• <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/postpartum-depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20378617>

