



Postpartum blues or postpartum depression?

Your baby is here. You've looked forward to this for many months or maybe even years. So why do you feel sad and tearful? First, infants are typically awake every two to four hours, which doesn't allow you a full night's sleep. Second, hormonal changes may make you feel less than happy. This is a time of adjustment and learning — both for you and your baby. But how do you know when you need help?

Postpartum blues¹

New mothers may experience something called the “baby blues.” It includes:

- Changes in mood from happy to sad
- Crying spells
- Irritability
- Feelings of sadness, anxiety or of being overwhelmed

The baby blues usually show up within three days of giving birth. And they often go away after a couple weeks.

Postpartum depression¹

The symptoms of postpartum depression are more severe and last longer than a case of the blues. These symptoms can begin any time within the first year after childbirth and include:

- All of the baby blues symptoms but they don't go away
- A sense of being alone
- Loss of pleasure in daily activities
- Trouble bonding with your baby
- Anxiety, despair and/or panic
- Difficulty eating, sleeping or caring for your baby

It's important to talk with your doctor so he or she can help you get treatment. This isn't something that goes away on its own. Treatment may help regulate your mood so you can get back to being yourself.

¹Is it postpartum depression or 'baby blues'? Web MD. Accessed June 2021.

Men can get postpartum depression too. In fact, about 26 percent of new dads develop paternal postnatal depression (PPND). And it's most common for those who have partners with postpartum depression.²

The rarest form of postpartum depression, postpartum psychosis, occurs about one to two times in every 1,000 births. It usually begins two weeks after childbirth. Women who have bipolar disorder are at an increased risk. Symptoms include³:

- Seeing or hearing things things that aren't there
- Feeling confused and unable to stay focused
- Rapid mood swings
- Trouble communicating

Postpartum psychosis requires immediate treatment. Report this to your doctor or go to the nearest emergency room.

If you experience baby blues, you might want to try the following:

- **Sleep as much as you can.** Rest is an important part of being a new mom.
- **Ask for help.** An hour or two a day to focus on exercise or relaxation can help your body get back into shape and allow some time just for you.
- **Focus on your baby, not chores.** Feeding, changing diapers, holding and talking to your baby are all ways to increase your connection. This provides the bonding experiences your infant needs to survive and thrive. The dishes and laundry can wait.
- **Talk about your feelings** with your partner and family members or friends. This can help you sort through the mixed emotions of new motherhood.
- **Join a support group** or new mother's group to share and learn from each other.
- **Avoid making major life changes** soon after giving birth. You are already making a major life adjustment. If this can't be avoided, try and get as much support as you can to help in your new situation.

For more information:

- Contact your primary care doctor or OB/GYN
- **Postpartum Support International;** phone: **800-944-4773**; text: **503-894-9453**
- **Postpartum depression in men**

You can contact us for further guidance and support on coping with postpartum depression. We're here for you 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.



²Rosen, Margory and Kelly, Diana. [Why we need to talk more about male postpartum depression.](#) Parents. Accessed June 2021.

³[Postpartum psychosis.](#) Postpartum support international. Accessed June 2021.

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