

While life with a new baby can be thrilling and rewarding, it can also be stressful at times. Many physical and emotional changes happen to a woman when she is pregnant and after she gives birth. These changes can make new mothers feel overwhelmed or depressed. This brochure describes the differences between “baby blues,” a condition that goes away on its own, and postpartum depression, a more serious condition. The good news is that postpartum depression is treatable.

Are “baby blues” the same thing as postpartum depression?

Baby blues is a mild condition. Many women – up to 50 percent of new mothers – experience baby blues, which begin in the days right after childbirth. Symptoms of baby blues include mood swings, tearfulness, irritability, anxiety and sadness. These symptoms may last only a few hours or as long as one to two weeks after delivery. Baby blues usually go away on their own and generally do not require treatment from a health care provider. If your symptoms do not go away or get worse, you may be experiencing postpartum depression.

Tips to cope with baby blues include:

- ❖ Get rest – nap when the baby sleeps, and let friends help you with errands, chores or childcare.
- ❖ Find time – even 15 minutes a day – to do something for yourself.
- ❖ Eat nutritious meals including a variety of fruits, vegetables and lean meat or fish. Try to limit caffeine, alcohol and sugar.
- ❖ Exercise – take a walk around the block to boost your metabolism and your spirits.
- ❖ Seek support from family, friends or other new moms. Talking about your concerns helps keep things in perspective.



What is postpartum depression?

Postpartum depression (PPD) can happen a few days or even months after childbirth. It may not start until a woman weans her baby from breastfeeding. It can happen after the birth of any child, not just the first child. A woman can have feelings similar to the baby blues – sadness, despair, anxiety and irritability. But with PPD these feelings are much stronger. Up to 20% of new mothers experience PPD.

Signs of PPD include:

- Not being able to sleep or being very tired, or both
- Feeling restless, irritable or sluggish
- Trouble focusing, remembering, or making decisions
- Feeling depressed, sad or crying a lot
- Not being able to eat and weight loss, or overeating and weight gain
- Headaches, chest pains, heart palpitations, numbness, or hyperventilation
- No interest or pleasure in activities, including sex
- Being overly worried about the baby or not having any interest in the baby
- Feeling worthless and guilty
- Being afraid of hurting the baby or yourself

Mothers with thoughts and feelings like these need to see a health care provider right away. They should not wait for the thoughts and feelings to go away. The sooner a mother gets help the sooner she can begin to feel better and care for the needs of her baby.

What causes PPD?

It's unclear what causes PPD. Symptoms may be triggered by hormonal changes after delivery, such as:

- A rapid decrease in the two female hormones, progesterone and estrogen. This may be similar to the mood changes a woman gets before her menstrual period, which are attributed to smaller changes in hormone levels.
- A sharp drop in thyroid levels. A simple thyroid test can help determine if thyroid levels are contributing to PPD.

Women who have had depression previously are especially at risk for PPD.

What other things contribute to PPD?

- Feeling tired after delivery, broken sleep patterns, and not enough rest often keep a new mother from regaining her full strength for weeks. This is particularly true after a cesarean delivery (C-Section).
- Feeling overwhelmed with a new, or another, baby to care for.
- Feeling stress from changes in work and home routines. Sometimes women think they have to be “super mom” or perfect. These thoughts are not realistic and can add stress.
- Having feelings of loss – loss of identity (who she is, or was, before having the baby), loss of control, loss of slim figure, and feeling less attractive.
- Having less free time and less control over time. Having to stay home indoors for longer periods of time and having less time to spend with her partner.

How is PPD treated?

It is important to know that postpartum depression is a medical illness that is treatable with both medication (antidepressants) and counseling. Some women with PPD also find it helpful to attend a support group to talk with other women who are going through the same thing.

If you suspect that you have postpartum depression, what should you do?

The first step toward feeling better is to tell your health care provider about your concerns and feelings. A new mom can experience guilt about feeling depressed when she is “supposed” to be excited and happy about her baby. It is very important to know that these feelings are not your fault. Having these feelings and reaching out for help are not a sign of weakness or failure as a mother.

- ❖ If you are having any feelings of depression or sadness that do not go away after a few days, call your health care provider.
- ❖ Take the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Screening at the end of this brochure. You can score the test yourself. If your score shows that you may be at risk, call your health care provider.
- ❖ For a referral to a behavioral health provider near you, or to get help right away, contact PacifiCare Behavioral Health.
- ❖ **If you have been thinking about hurting yourself or your baby, contact your health care provider right away or call 911.**

Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Screening

The questions below can help you determine if you are experiencing PPD. You can score the test yourself and call your health care provider if your score indicates that you may be at risk.

Complete the questionnaire by circling the answer that most closely matches how you have felt in the last 7 days. Add up your score and compare your results to the score interpretation.

1. I have been able to laugh and see the funny side of things

- (0) As much as I always could
- (1) Not quite so much now
- (2) Definitely not so much now
- (3) Not at all

2. I have looked forward with enjoyment to things

- (0) As much as I ever did
- (1) Rather less than I used to
- (2) Definitely less than I used to
- (3) Hardly at all

3. I have blamed myself unnecessarily when things went wrong

- (0) No, never
- (1) Not very often
- (2) Yes, some of the time
- (3) Yes, most of the time

4. I have been anxious or worried for no good reason

- (0) No, not at all
- (1) Hardly ever
- (2) Yes, sometimes
- (3) Yes, very often

5. I have felt scared or panicky for no good reason

- (0) No, not at all
- (1) No, not much
- (2) Yes, sometimes
- (3) Yes, quite a lot

6. Things have been getting on top of me

- (0) No, I've been coping as well as ever
- (1) No, most of the time I've coped quite well
- (2) Yes, sometimes I haven't been coping as well as usual
- (3) Yes, most of the time I haven't been able to cope

7. I have been so unhappy, I have had difficulty sleeping

- (0) No, not at all
- (1) Not very often
- (2) Yes, sometimes
- (3) Yes, most of the time

8. I have felt sad and miserable

- (0) No, not at all
- (1) Not very often
- (2) Yes, sometimes
- (3) Yes, most of the time

9. I have been so unhappy that I have been crying

- (0) No, never
- (1) Only occasionally
- (2) Yes, quite often
- (3) Yes, most of the time

10. The thought of harming myself has occurred to me

- (0) Never
- (1) Hardly ever
- (2) Sometimes
- (3) Yes, quite often

Score Interpretation

- 1-10 No further screening required
- 11-14 Repeat test in 2 weeks
- 15+ Contact your health care provider or PacifiCare Behavioral Health

For More Information

For help finding a behavioral health professional that can help with PPD, contact PacifiCare Behavioral Health.

- Harvard Pilgrim Health Care: (888) 777-4742
- AZ, CA, NM, NV, OR, and WA:
(800) 999-9585
- CO: (888) 777-2735
- OK: (800) 524-4574
- TX: (800) 430-0033
- Other States: (800) 999-9585

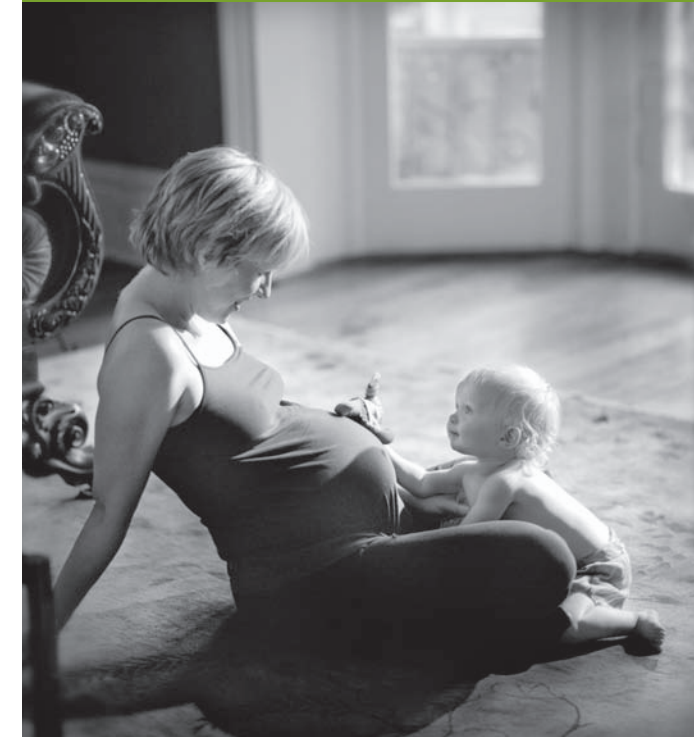
Additional information is also available at the following websites:

- NATIONAL WOMEN'S HEALTH INFORMATION CENTER
<http://www.4woman.gov>
1-800-994-WOMAN (9662)
- DEPRESSION AFTER DELIVERY, INC.
<http://www.depressionafterdelivery.com>

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The information contained in this brochure is partially duplicated from: Frequently Asked Questions about Postpartum Depression (The National Women's Health Information Center, July 2002)



When Baby Blues Don't Go Away