



Postpartum Mood Disorder Symptoms

Symptoms can include any of the following:

- sadness, uncontrollable crying
- sleep difficulties, too much or too little
- appetite difficulties, too much or too little
- irritability, worry, anger, agitation
- lack of interest in baby, family or friends
- lack of energy or motivation
- extreme feelings of guilt, worthlessness, despair, hopelessness
- inability to concentrate or make decisions
- anxiety or panic attacks
- preoccupation with health of baby
- scary thoughts about harming oneself or one's baby
- feeling out of control or overwhelmed

Sadly, new mothers may feel ashamed of their feelings and may be reluctant to share their experiences with their healthcare provider. They may have had expectations of being thrilled after the arrival of their baby now find it challenging to understand their feelings and reactions to motherhood.

It is crucial to realize that postpartum depression is NOT a character flaw or sign of weakness. It can happen to any woman, regardless of her culture, age or economic background.

However, some women are more at risk. The year following childbirth is a vulnerable time for women with the following risk factors:

- previous history of depression or postpartum depression
- first time mothers
- family history of mental illness
- any substance abuse history
- complications during delivery
- extreme sleep deprivation
- having a baby with a difficult temperament or health challenges
- high stress levels
- lack of support from friends and family

What to do if you think you might have postpartum depression?

- Ask for help and accept it
- Eat healthfully, exercise in whatever way you can
- Join a postpartum support group
- Find someone to speak openly about your struggles, ideally, a therapist with postpartum expertise.



- Explore the following links:
 - www.postpartum.net
 - www.ppdsupportpage.com – online support group
 - www.postpartumny.com
 - www.MedEdPPD.com

Researchers are still unsure of the exact etiology or cause of postpartum depression. It appears to be a confluence of factors that varies from individual to individual. Some factors that are known to contribute are:

- tremendous hormonal changes during pregnancy/postpartum period
- sleep deprivation
- psychological impact of shift to new mother role