



You are not alone!

Without help, depressed mothers may find it hard to deal with daily life and stress. They may not bond well with their babies. Their babies may develop learning or behavior problems.

Treatment can make a big difference. Sadly, most women never get the help they need. Getting help right away can prevent more serious problems later.

Resources

Healthy New Moms
Depression During and After Pregnancy Support
800-PPD-MOMS (800-773-6667)
www.healthynewmoms.org

Maryland Suicide and Crisis Hotline
800-422-0009

Postpartum Support International
800-944-4PPD (800-944-4773)
www.postpartum.net



Martin O'Malley, Governor
Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor
Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary, DHMH

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Maternal and Child Health Bureau
201 West Preston Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
410-767-6713
1-877-4MD-DHMH (463-3464)
Fax 410-333-5233
Maryland Relay 1-800-735-2258

Mental Hygiene Administration
410-402-8300

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About Postpartum Depression

Depression affects one out of every eight new mothers, and it can be treated. Getting help means that you are looking out for your family and yourself.



Postpartum Depression

Causes

Depression is an illness that is caused by chemical changes in the brain. It can be brought on by the many stresses of being a new mother. It can also be due to the change in hormones after having a baby. The exact cause is not known.

Do you mean the “baby blues”?

No. Most new mothers get the “baby blues” but their symptoms are mild. They may feel tearful, anxious, and moody. Symptoms come and go but don’t last more than two weeks after the baby’s birth.

Risk Factors

Depression is more common in women who have had:

- ♦ depression or bipolar disorder in the past – before, during or after pregnancy
- ♦ severe PMS (premenstrual syndrome)
- ♦ family members with depression or bipolar disorder
- ♦ recent stress such as death of a loved one, and family or job problems

However, women with no risk factors can become depressed.

Could I have postpartum depression?

Symptoms of depression most often appear two weeks to several months after delivery. Seek help if any of these symptoms last for more than two weeks:

- ♦ Feeling very sad, anxious or cranky
- ♦ Frequent crying
- ♦ Not feeling up to doing daily tasks
- ♦ Not feeling hungry, or eating when not hungry
- ♦ Not wanting to take care of yourself (dress, shower, fix hair)
- ♦ Trouble sleeping when tired, or sleeping too much
- ♦ Things don’t seem fun or interesting anymore
- ♦ Trouble concentrating
- ♦ Feeling hopeless
- ♦ Trouble making decisions
- ♦ Worrying too much about the baby or not caring about the baby
- ♦ Fear of harming or being alone with the baby
- ♦ Thoughts of self-harm or suicide



Treatment

Medications used to treat depression work extremely well. Many mothers breastfeed while they are taking them. More studies are needed, but the risk to breast-fed infants appears to be very low.

Counseling also helps. For some women, it may be all that is needed. For others, it can be used along with the drugs the doctor prescribes. Family, friends or support groups can also help reduce stress.

Other health problems such as thyroid disease and bipolar disorder can cause many of the same symptoms but need a different treatment. Talk to a doctor who has treated women with postpartum depression. Together, you can choose a treatment plan that is right for you.