

mental health after birth

The baby blues

It is very common to feel sad after your baby is born. This is called the **baby blues**. The baby blues is not postpartum depression; it's shorter and less severe. The baby blues last a week or two after your baby is born.



You may experience:

- Mood swings
- Trouble focusing or getting work done
- Not feeling hungry or eating too much
- Trouble sleeping
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Irritability

If you're experiencing these symptoms for **longer than two weeks**, or if you have more severe mental health symptoms, you might have one of the other postpartum mental health issues.

The following can help:

- Ask for help from your partner, family, and friends. Tell them exactly what they can do for you. This might involve them watching your baby so you can nap, take a shower, or get out of the house.
- Ask your midwife to help you find a support group of new parents either virtually or in person.
- Try to connect with experienced parents you trust, whether that's friends, coworkers, or neighbors. Ask your midwife for help if you need it.

"Baby blues" is a normal part of the postpartum period, but if you are concerned or have questions, we recommend checking in with your midwife.



Postpartum depression and postpartum anxiety

Postpartum depression and postpartum anxiety are similar to the baby blues, but the symptoms are worse and last longer. Hormonal changes, lack of sleep and life changes can all contribute. These two conditions are very common and often occur at the same time. Symptoms can appear any time within the year of giving birth.

- Postpartum depression and postpartum anxiety can be challenging but are treatable.
- Untreated depression and anxiety can impact your relationships and quality of life. It can make it hard for you to take care of your family and yourself.

Postpartum depression signs and symptoms include:

- **Behaviors:** Frequent crying, pulling away from friends and family, sleeping too much or not at all.
- **Thoughts:** Thinking you're not good enough or a bad parent. Having a hard time thinking clearly or making decisions.
- **Feelings:** Severe mood swings, difficulty bonding with baby, or feeling sad and hopeless.
- **Physical symptoms:** Overwhelming tiredness and loss of energy.

Postpartum anxiety signs and symptoms include:

- **Behaviors:** Not being able to sit still, compulsive behaviors (repetitively checking on baby, constant cleaning, reordering objects, etc), sleeping too much or not at all.
- **Thoughts:** Racing thoughts or thinking about the worst. Sometimes these thoughts are bizarre and can even be a little scary.¹
- **Feelings:** Constant worry or feeling that something bad is going to happen.
- **Physical symptoms:** Loss of appetite, dizziness, nausea, hot flashes, and/or panic attacks.

¹ If you are having scary thoughts, it does not mean you are a bad parent or you have psychosis. It could actually be a sign that you may have postpartum depression or anxiety. Please do not be afraid to tell your midwife about what you are experiencing. They are here to help you.

Treatment for postpartum depression and anxiety

Postpartum depression and postpartum anxiety are treatable. You are not alone. There are a number of treatment options available. Some of these include the following:

- Finding loved ones to help support you so that you can rest and care for yourself.
- Joining a support group
- Psychotherapy/talk therapy
- Medication

Please let us know if you think you might have postpartum depression or anxiety. The sooner to reach out for help, the sooner you can feel better. Please know that having depression or anxiety is not a reflection of you as a person or parent. We can help you find the right treatment for you and your situation. We are available 24/7 for you.

Are medications safe if I am nursing?

If you are prescribed medication as part of your treatment, be sure to tell your healthcare provider that you are nursing. Your provider should be able to talk to you about the risks and benefits of nursing while on your medication. There are a number of medications that have been tested and deemed safe by the FDA for lactating people. If you still have questions or concerns, please reach out to us.



If you are feeling overwhelmed, scared, or having any of the other symptoms listed here, **we want you to let us know.** Please call your clinic, anytime, to reach the on-call midwife for support.

If you're having thoughts of harming yourself or your baby, go directly to the emergency room or call 911.

Postpartum psychosis

Postpartum psychosis is a rare, very severe condition that usually begins in the first week after birth.

There is treatment for postpartum psychosis. You might take medication, have therapy, or in some cases, get in-patient treatment in a hospital.



If you think you have postpartum psychosis, go directly to the emergency room for help.

Postpartum psychosis signs and symptoms include:

- **Behaviors:** Odd behaviors, speaking very fast, and/or endless pacing. Sometimes the person will react to things that are not seen or heard by others.
- **Thoughts:** Confused, forgetful, and believing things that are not based in reality (delusions).
- **Feelings:** Feeling very strong and powerful or very depressed. Mood changes from highest highs to lowest lows.
- **Physical symptoms:** Unable to sleep. Seeing or hearing things that are not real.

Important reminders

- **Postpartum psychosis is a medical issue**, not a problem related to negligence or child abuse. Your healthcare provider will recognize it as a medical issue.
- **Postpartum psychosis may lead to life-threatening thoughts or behaviors and requires immediate treatment. It does not go away on its own.**

We are here for you.

If you need any support with your mental health, call your clinic. There is always a midwife on call to help you. You can also call or text the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline 24/7 at (833) 943-5746 for help in English or Spanish.