

What is Postpartum Depression?

During pregnancy, or shortly after the birth of a child, some parents experience **postpartum depression (PPD)**. PPD involves depressed mood, loss of interest in activities, and several other physical and emotional symptoms. These symptoms can be debilitating, making it difficult to perform everyday tasks.

Signs and Symptoms

Note: Everyone's experience with PPD is unique. Some will develop most symptoms, while others develop just a few. Diagnoses should only be made by a qualified professional.

depressed mood	loss of interest in activities	irritability	thoughts of harming the newborn
feelings of guilt or worthlessness	thoughts of suicide	fatigue	insomnia
anxiety	difficulty coping with daily activities	poor concentration	significant changes in appetite

Risk Factors

young maternal age	low income	marital conflict and low partner support
lack of social support	stressful life events during pregnancy	history of depression or PPD
depression or anxiety during pregnancy	immigrant status	family history of depression

Treatments

Psychotherapy

Talk therapy is usually recommended for mild to moderate PPD. Parents learn to reduce stressors and improve coping skills. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and interpersonal therapy are the most common PPD therapies.

Medication

Medication may be recommended for severe PPD. When taken regularly, antidepressant medication is effective in treating PPD. It may be used alone or in combination with talk therapy.

Other Information

Many women experience "baby blues" in the days following childbirth. This involves brief crying spells, irritability, nervousness, poor sleep, and emotional reactivity. Baby blues does not rise to the level of PPD and usually resolves in about one week, without treatment.

A parent's PPD can lead to cognitive, social, and behavioral problems in their child. However, when PPD is treated, these issues tend to improve.

PPD affects about 1 in 10 women during pregnancy, or in the weeks following delivery. Women who are diagnosed with PPD once are more likely to experience it during future pregnancies.