



# POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

Looks Can Be Deceiving...  
Talk About It, Treat It, Defeat It!



## What is postpartum depression?

Postpartum depression – “PPD” for short – is a type of depression that affects 1 out of 8 new mothers within a year after they give birth. PPD is long-lasting sadness. If you are a woman with depression, you are not alone. Help is out there.

## Here are some symptoms of PPD:

- » Loss of interest or pleasure in life
- » Loss of energy and motivation to do things
- » Sleeping too much or too little
- » Feeling like life isn't worth living
- » Irritability, anxiety, or restlessness
- » Feeling worthless and guilty
- » Withdrawal from friends and family
- » Eating too much or too little
- » Having trouble remembering, focusing, or making decisions
- » Crying a lot
- » Having thoughts of hurting yourself
- » Thinking about hurting your baby

## What PPD is NOT:

PPD is not something to be ashamed of.

It is not your fault.

It is not a sign of a weak personality.

PPD is an illness that requires medical care just like diabetes is an illness that requires care. You *can* take the steps to deal with PPD and its symptoms.



## Checklist of Symptoms:

Use this list if you think you might have PPD. If you feel you have any of the symptoms below that have lasted for more than 2 weeks and are affecting your life, talk to your doctor, nurse, or midwife.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sad   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Scary fantasies*</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty  | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of confidence      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hopeless  | <input type="checkbox"/> Full of doubts          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lonely  | <input type="checkbox"/> Mood swings             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helpless  | <input type="checkbox"/> Appetite changes        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worthless   | <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelmed             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to make decisions                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive crying        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confused  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tired/exhausted         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely agitated                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to laugh                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tense                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Thoughts of hurting yourself or your baby*</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Isolated                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strange visions*</b>                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor self-care          |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Low self-esteem         |

\*Items in **bold print** require immediate attention. Please see your doctor.

## Who can get PPD?

Any woman who has had a baby in the past year can get PPD. There is no warning for PPD.

It doesn't matter how old you are, what race you are, or how much money you have.



## When can I get PPD?

PPD can happen any time in the first year after delivery. Symptoms last longer than 2 weeks and affect your ability to function as a mother.

## Why would I get PPD?

After delivering a baby, mothers sometimes go through emotional changes because of a drop in chemicals in the body called hormones. These changes can include mood swings, sadness, crying spells, changes in appetite, sleeping problems, and feeling anxious, irritable, or lonely.

Remember, it is not because of something you did. Depression is caused by a chemical imbalance.

## **Other questions:**

### **Who should I talk to?**

### **Where can I get help?**

Get help by first talking to your doctor, nurse practitioner, or nurse midwife. He or she can help and may give you medications for depression, or suggest a counselor. You can also join groups with other mothers like you.

### **Can I keep this private?**

Yes – your medical care is confidential. It is, however, a good idea to discuss your treatment with a spouse or close friend so that they can help you through this.

### **What about cost?**

Treatment of PPD is like treatment of any other medical condition — care is covered by insurance or through federal or state insurance assistance.



### **How does PPD affect me and my baby?**

When a mother has PPD, she may lack energy and not want to play with her baby. She may have trouble paying attention to things.

She may not be able to meet her baby's needs for love. This may make her feel guilty and lose confidence in herself as a mother — which makes PPD even worse.

### **How can mothers with PPD get better?**

Good news – treatment is available, and it works!

There are 2 main types of treatment for PPD: **medications** and **therapy**.

### **Can PPD come back once I feel better?**

You might be at risk following the birth of future children. If you get help for your PPD and still don't feel better, talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner, or nurse midwife.

## Tips for Coping With PPD

- Find someone to talk to about your feelings.
- Talk with another mother about your feelings and problems. She may have “words of wisdom.”
- Ask your family for help with childcare, chores, and errands.
- Find time for yourself. Try exercising (walking), taking a bath, or something else you enjoy. Give yourself 15 minutes a day!
- Don’t worry about being perfect, and know that your feelings are normal.
- Avoid being alone.
- Eat a good, healthy diet. Eat small, frequent meals.
- Keep a diary. Write down your emotions. You will notice that what you write in your diary will change and show a better, healthier person as time goes on.
- Remember it is OK to feel overwhelmed. Parenting is hard!
- Talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner, or nurse midwife about how you feel.

### Remember:



**You are not alone!  
You will get better!**

**Don't be afraid to ask for help!  
You and your baby deserve  
health and happiness!**

You can learn more about PPD from the following places:

National Women's Health Information Center  
Phone (800) 994-9662  
<http://womenshealth.gov/faq/postpartum.htm>

American Psychiatric Association  
Phone (888) 35-PSYCH or (888) 357-7924  
<http://healthyminds.org/postpartumdepression.cfm>

MedEdPPD  
<http://www.mededppd.org>

Postpartum Support International  
Phone (800) 944-4PPD or (800) 944-4773  
<http://www.postpartum.net>

You can download a printable version from:



<http://www.mededppd.org>

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