

Who is Affected?

Any woman who has given birth during the last year can experience confusing postpartum emotions.

Treatment

Treatment for postpartum distress varies depending on the type and severity of symptoms, and may include one or several of the following:

- Temporary hospitalization
- Counseling
- Medications
- Psychotherapy

Where can I get help?

You should contact your physician if you think you may be experiencing postpartum emotional symptoms that need professional assistance.

The following additional resources offer trained healthcare professionals who will offer confidential services:

BHS Family Services

Monday – Thursday, 8 AM – 8 PM

Friday, 8 AM – 4:30 PM

724-284-4894

Depression After Delivery

Toll-free: 1-800-944-4PPD (Information requests)

www.behavenet.com/dadinc/

Family Resources WARMLINE

Telephone support for non-medical parenting concerns, including postpartum issues:

1-800-641-4546 or 412-641-4546



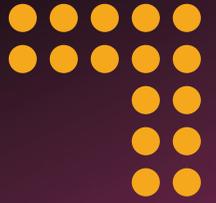
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Postpartum Adjustment



Feelings After Birth

The birth of a baby is an exciting time for new parents. However, new mothers often go through periods of both physical and emotional change.

Even though you have prepared for your baby's arrival, caring for an infant can be hard work. Many women experience some unexpected "highs" and "lows."

New mothers are surprised at the energy it takes to care for their new baby and many may begin to feel anxious, frustrated, uncertain or overwhelmed.

During this adjustment, support from family and friends can be very helpful.

There are three categories of postpartum emotions that can occur:

Postpartum Psychosis

This is the most severe and, fortunately, the least common postpartum reaction. It is a serious emergency and requires immediate medical help. Symptoms are very exaggerated and severe, and may include:

- Confusion
- Insomnia
- Agitation
- Bizarre feelings or behavior
- Hallucinations
- Rambling speech
- Hearing voices

Postpartum or Baby Blues

The "blues" is a very common reaction occurring in the first few days after delivery, usually appearing suddenly on the third or fourth day. It typically lasts a short period of time and the symptoms usually disappear on their own.

- Affects 70-85% of women during the first one to two weeks after birth
- Cause is unknown, although it is thought to be due to fluctuations in hormone levels
- Common symptoms include:
 - *Feeling sad, irritable*
 - *Little appetite*
 - *Headaches*
 - *Crying spells*
 - *Low energy level*
 - *Lack of confidence in mothering ability*
 - *Impatience*
- While waiting for the blues to pass, a new mother should:
 - *Get plenty of rest*
 - *Eat plenty of protein-rich foods*
 - *Seek support as needed from friends, family and healthcare providers*
 - *Sleep when the baby sleeps*
 - *Trust her abilities – most parents do what is right for their babies*

Postpartum Depression

Postpartum depression can occur within days of delivery or appear gradually, sometimes up to a year later.

- Affects 10-15% of new mothers
- Symptoms of postpartum blues become more intense and last longer than two weeks
- 20-30% of women get postpartum depression more than once
- Personal or family history of depression is a risk factor
- Common symptoms include:
 - *Overconcern or negative feelings for the baby*
 - *Appetite and sleep disturbances*
 - *Sadness, depression, hopelessness*
 - *Nervousness, anxiety, panic*
 - *Sluggishness, fatigue, exhaustion*
 - *Poor concentration, confusion, memory loss*

A woman suffering from postpartum depression may experience one or a combination of the above symptoms. She may also experience "good days" alternating with "bad days."