



Guide to Pregnancy and Postpartum Mental Health

Many people experience changes in mood during pregnancy or after the arrival of the baby. Some changes are mild and can improve with increased self-care. Other changes may need to be assessed by your healthcare provider or need treatment. This is a guide to help you watch your mood. It has resources that can help you find appropriate help at the right time.

MILD SYMPTOMS: Most people in the postpartum period experience some of these symptoms. Here are self-care strategies that help.

If you are...

- Feeling tearful, anxious, or mildly irritable, mixed with times of feeling well.
- Having difficulty managing your emotions (mood swings).
- Emotionally sensitive (mood reactivity).
- Feel overwhelmed by daily routine but still able to care for yourself and baby.
- Having some trouble with sleep or mild changes in appetite.

Then...

- Continue to monitor for symptoms and their severity and frequency (see moderate and severe sections).
- Ask for help from family and friends as it takes a village to care for an infant.
- Make an effort/aim to get a few hours of uninterrupted sleep every day. Try sharing nighttime responsibilities with other parent, other family members.
- Focus on adequate nutrition and hydration across the day.
- Start to incorporate 10-20 mins of light physical activity in your daily routine. As soon as your doctor allows it, you can try walking, light yoga or stretching.
- Try to take 20-25 mins everyday only for yourself. Self-care routine like a daily shower, change of clothes or doing your hair can help. Some other things to try are watching a good show, listening to music, reading a light book or a warm bath.
- Spend time talking or doing activities with people you enjoy spending time with. Continue to watch your mood closely. Talk to your healthcare provider if you begin to see signs mentioned in yellow or red sections of this pamphlet.

MODERATE SYMPTOMS: When difficulties happen most days and start to interfere with your life ask for help. Call your Healthcare Provider promptly.

If you are...

- Experiencing sadness, frequent crying spells, misery.
- Experiencing loss of pleasure or interest in things you used to enjoy.
- Feeling numb or disconnected.
- Feeling guilty about everyday things and blaming yourself.
- Feeling anxious all or most of the time. Having trouble separating from the baby, worrying about your own or baby's health all the time.
- Feeling overwhelmed with daily routines, work and unable to keep up.
- Worried/ Fearful about "losing control".
- Having racing or scary intrusive thoughts about harm coming to baby or others in the family.
- Feeling very irritable, losing temper about small things, agitated.
- Having difficulty making decisions, difficulty concentrating or remembering things (feel foggy).
- Constantly worried about not being a good parent.
- Unable to enjoy your time with the baby or scared of being alone with the baby.
- Having difficulty falling or staying asleep or sleeping too much. Eating much more or less than you usually do.
- Relying on alcohol or other substances to cope.

Then...

- Promptly contact your healthcare provider.
- Reach out to one of the resources listed on the next page.

SEVERE SYMPTOMS: Difficulties happen every day and others notice that you are having trouble functioning. *GET HELP NOW!*

If you are...

- Feeling helpless, hopeless or worthless.
- Having thoughts of not wanting to go on or being ok with something bad happening to you.
- Having thoughts of hurting yourself or the baby.
- Seeing or hearing things that other people do not see or hear.
- Suspicious or fearful that other people might want to hurt you or your baby.
- Experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual harm by a current or former intimate partner.
- Feeling unusually confident or that you have special powers or abilities.
- Feeling unsafe at home or in a relationship.
- Feeling hyper or wound up and not needing to sleep.

Then...Get Help Now!

- Call your OB/GYN, family physician, or other primary care clinician.
- Call Health Resource and Service Administration (HRSA) at 1-833-943-5746 (English and Spanish) for a 24/7/365 response within 5 minutes, or visit their website at <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/national-maternal-mental-health-hotline>.
- Individuals needing support for suicidal, mental health and/or substance use crisis can call or text the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 988 or online chat at <https://988lifeline.org/> for a 24/7/365 live connection.
- Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or visit their website at <https://www.thehotline.org/>.
- Use the National Crisis text line: Text HOME to 741741 from anywhere in USA, anytime, about any type of crisis.
- Consider going to the emergency room for immediate help.

REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT:

For help locating emotional support, education and mental health providers in your community:

- Call the Postpartum Resource Center NY toll-free at 855-631-0001 or 631-422-2255, 7 days a week 9am -5pm (English and Spanish). All calls returned the same day, or visit their website at www.postpartumny.org.
- Call the NY State Growing Up Healthy Hotline at 1-800-522-5006, available 24 hours daily, 7 days a week, to help provide linkage with local resources.
- Call the Postpartum Support International 24/7 helpline at 1-800-944-4773 or text 800-944-4773 (calls and texts returned within 24 hours), or visit their website at www.postpartum.net/get-help/psi-helpline.
- Visit SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>.

Learn More About Mental Health in Pregnancy/Postpartum

Visit these websites to learn more:

- omh.ny.gov/omhweb/maternal-depression
- https://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/health_care/prenatal/
- https://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/health_care/perinatal/perinatal_depression.htm