

Mood Changes After Delivering a Baby

What mood changes could I have after delivering my baby?

During pregnancy and after the birth of your baby you may have many different mood changes and feelings. Being pregnant, going through labor and caring for a baby is all hard work. You may feel happy and excited one minute and feel worried and sad the next minute. These “highs” and “lows” are very common. They are called the “baby blues” and usually go away on their own a couple weeks after your baby is born.

If these feelings do not go away after a couple of weeks and you begin to worry about yourself, you may be suffering from a postpartum mood disorder. A postpartum mood disorder is an illness, just like heart disease. It changes the way you act and feel and can happen at anytime during the first year after the birth of your baby. There are different kinds of postpartum mood disorders: (1) postpartum anxiety and/or panic disorder (2) postpartum obsessive-compulsive disorder and (3) postpartum depression.

Who has postpartum mood disorders?

Any woman who is pregnant or has had a baby can have a postpartum mood disorder. They are very common. In fact, at least one in ten mothers have some type of postpartum depression. No one knows the exact reason for postpartum mood disorders. It does not matter if you have lots of help and support at home or whether your baby was born healthy. A postpartum mood disorder can happen without warning and none of the symptoms are your fault. It brings guilt and sadness at a time most women think they should be happy.

Can postpartum mood disorders be treated?

Mood disorders before, after or during pregnancy can be treated. Support, counseling and/or medicines can help. Many of these medicines appear to be safe in pregnancy and during breastfeeding. There is no reason to suffer alone. Many of the medicines are safe to take while you are breastfeeding. Your health care provider can help make a plan that is best for you.

What are some of the symptoms of Postpartum Anxiety/Panic Disorder?

- Strong feelings of anxiety and/or fear
- Fast breathing
- Fast heart rate
- Hot or cold flashes
- Chest pain
- Shaking
- Dizziness

What are some of the symptoms of Postpartum Obsessive Compulsive Disorder?

- Scary or unwanted thoughts that happen over and over (thoughts may be of hurting your baby)
- Trying to stay away from the baby to help stop the scary or unwanted thoughts
- Anxiety or fear
- Feeling sad or hopeless

What are some of the symptoms of Postpartum Depression?

- Loss of interest or pleasure in life
- Feeling sad, guilty and hopeless
- Not feeling hungry
- Less energy and desire to do things
- A hard time falling asleep or staying asleep
- Sleeping more than usual
- Crying a lot
- Feeling restless, tense or anxious

If any of the above symptoms last greater than 2 weeks, seek help from:

- Doctor, Midwife, or Nurse
- Counselor
- Therapist
- Social Worker

Contact either the NC Family Health Resource at 1-800-367-2229 or Depression after Delivery National Hotline at 1-800-944-4773 to find out about local resources.

If you are having any of the following feelings, seek help **right away** from your health care provider, clinic or an emergency room:

- Fear of hurting the baby
- Fear of hurting yourself
- Hallucinations/delusions – or thoughts that break from the real world

There is potential for support all around you. Find someone who is willing to listen.

This could be your:

- Partner or a family member
- Friend
- Doctor, Midwife, or Nurse
- Therapist
- A new-mother's group at your church or temple
- Counselor
- Social worker
- Minister

Do not feel bad about asking. It is okay to ask for and get help from others. Let your family and friends read this information so they better understand what postpartum mood disorders are all about and that you need help.

Remember, postpartum mood disorders are very common and can be treated.

Approved by NC Women's Hospital Patient Education Steering Committee, November 18, 2002