# Postpartum Depression Fact Sheet for Women and Their Support Network

**This fact sheet gives basic information about postpartum depression (PPD) and can be helpful to women with PPD and those who support them. For more information or for help finding care, reach out to a health care professional or the 24/7 National Maternal Mental Health Hotline: 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262).**



## What is Postpartum Depression?

"Postpartum" means the time after giving birth. Postpartum depression (PPD) is a mental health condition that affects some women after giving birth.

Feeling sad, anxious, or overwhelmed are some of the signs of PPD. You might not feel connected to your baby, or you might not feel love or care for the baby. These feelings can happen any time, but if they last longer than two weeks, you may have PPD. The signs of PPD can begin during pregnancy or in the months following birth.

## What are the signs and symptoms of postpartum depression?

Everyone experiences PPD differently, but here are some common signs:

- Feeling angry or moody
- Feeling sad or hopeless
- Feeling guilty, shameful, or worthless
- Eating more or less than usual
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Unusual crying or sadness
- Loss of interest, joy, or pleasure in things you used to enjoy
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Possible thoughts of harming the baby or yourself

If you're having these thoughts or feelings, reach out for support. Call **1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)** for 24/7 free confidential support for pregnant and new moms. **If you're in mental health distress or a suicidal crisis, call or text the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988** for free and confidential support.

## What are the risk factors for postpartum depression?

PPD is common: About 1 in 8 women report symptoms of postpartum depression in the year after giving birth. You may be more likely to develop PPD if you:

- Had depression before or during pregnancy
- Have a family history of depression
- Experienced abuse or adversity as a child
- Had a difficult or traumatic birth
- Had problems with a previous pregnancy or birth
- Have little or no support from family, friends, or partners
- Are or have experienced domestic violence. For help, visit or call the **National Domestic Violence Hotline — 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233)**
- Have relationship struggles, money problems, or experience other stressful life events
- Are under the age of 20
- Have a hard time breastfeeding
- Have a baby that was born prematurely and/or has special health care needs
- Had an unplanned pregnancy

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Although there are many reasons why someone may develop PPD, it's important to know that with support and treatment, healing is possible.

**To hear how different women experienced signs and symptoms of PPD, go to www.womenshealth.gov/talkingPPD**

## How can I find support or treatment?

Everyone's journey to healing is unique. There are many ways someone struggling with PPD can get help. The first step is reaching out for support. You can talk to your health care professional, family, friends, or other people you trust for help. Working with a health care professional is a good way to create a plan that will work for you. Here are some ways to get help—they can be used alone or together:

- **Therapy:** Counseling or therapy sessions with a mental health professional can help you understand and cope with your emotions and challenges.
- **Medication:** In some cases, medicine may be prescribed to help manage symptoms.
- **Support groups:** Joining a support group of others experiencing PPD can provide comfort and understanding.
- **Self-care:** Taking care of yourself is important. Do your best to get enough rest, eat food with a lot of nutrients like fresh produce and whole grains, be physically active, and ask for help when needed.
- **Social support:** Reach out to family, friends, or other people you trust who can offer advice or support.

**To hear how different women found support for PPD, go to www.womenshealth.gov/talkingPPD**

## What can I do at home to feel better while getting care for postpartum depression?

It's important to work with a health care professional to support your path to healing. There are also things you can do at home to help you feel better while you're getting help from a professional:

- Talk about your feelings with your partner, supportive family members, and friends.
- Rest as much as you can. Sleep when the baby is sleeping. If this is hard, ask someone you trust to watch the baby so you can rest.
- Don't try to do everything by yourself. Ask your partner, family, and friends for help with things like childcare, housework, and grocery shopping.
- Make time for breaks, spending time with your partner, or visiting with friends. Find places where you can also bring your baby.
- Talk with other mothers to learn from their experiences.
- Join a support group. Ask your health care professional about groups in your area.
- When possible, don't make any major life changes right after giving birth, like moving or starting a new job. These can cause unneeded stress.

## What are the most important things for me to know?

- Many women experience PPD.
- While it can feel hard or lonely, healing is possible.
- The first step is to reach out for help and information. Call the **National Maternal Mental Health Hotline: 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)**.
- Visit **www.womenshealth.gov/talkingPPD**.

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# Postpartum Depression Resources

**Everyone's journey to healing from postpartum depression (PPD) is unique. The first step is reaching out for support. Below are national resources and tips to find local support.**



## If you are in mental health distress or a suicidal crisis:

**Call or text the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988** for free access to a trained crisis counselor who can provide you support and connect you with needed help and resources. If you're deaf or hard of hearing, use your preferred relay service or **dial 711 then 988**.

## If you are experiencing symptoms of postpartum depression and need support now:

Call or text the **National Maternal Mental Health Hotline at 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)** for 24/7 free access to professional counselors. If you're deaf or hard of hearing, use your preferred relay service or dial **711 then 1-833-852-6262**.

**The hotline provides:**

- Real-time support and information
- Response within a few minutes, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Resources
- Referrals to local and telehealth providers and support groups
- Culturally sensitive support
- Counselors who speak English and Spanish
- Interpreter services in 60 languages

## If you're looking for resources in your area:

- **Talk to someone you trust** like family, friends, or other moms. They can listen and help you find local support options.
- **Talk to your health care professional** and let them know what you're experiencing. Ask for guidance and information about local resources. If you don't have a health care professional you can find one using the Find a Health Center Tool at **findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov**.
- **Reach out to local community organizations** like social service agencies, family resource centers, libraries, community centers, or places of worship. They may be able to provide information about support groups or resources for women dealing with PPD.
- **Look for support groups** that give women with PPD an opportunity to meet up and talk. These groups can offer understanding, advice, and a chance to connect with others who can relate to what you're going through. Some examples are new moms' groups, breastfeeding support groups, and local chapters of PPD support groups.
- **Search online for local support groups** using websites or social media groups where women discuss PPD to see if they offer local meetups or gatherings that you can join.
- **Call or text "Help" to the Postpartum Support International helpline at 1-800-944-4773** or visit www.postpartum.net for PPD information, resources, and support groups for women, partners, and supporters.

**To learn more, visit www.womenshealth.gov/talkingPPD**

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# Tips for Talking with a Health Care Professional About Postpartum Depression

**Postpartum depression (PPD) is common and treatable. About 1 in 8 women report symptoms of PPD in the year after giving birth. There are many ways someone struggling with PPD can get help. The first step is reaching out for support. Working with a health care professional is a good way to create a plan that will work for you.**

## Prepare Ahead of Your Visit

Health care professionals are often rushing between patients. You can make the most of your time by preparing ahead of your visit.

- **Write down your questions:** Make a list of things you want to talk about and any questions or concerns you have. If you have questions about taking medication while breastfeeding, make sure to include those questions on the list.
- **List your medications:** It is important to tell health care professionals about all the medicines you take. These include medicines given to you by a health care professional as well as things you can buy without a prescription like pain medicines, vitamins, and supplements. You can use this **worksheet** to keep track of your medications.
- **Check your family history:** It's important to know your family's physical and mental health history. Sharing these details with your health care professional helps them assess your risk of developing PPD, ask you about symptoms you may be experiencing, give you advice on how to lower your risk, and help find treatment that works for you.

## Consider Bringing a Friend or Relative

Sometimes it is hard to remember everything a health care professional says in an appointment, especially if you are not feeling well. Having a friend or family member with you can be helpful. They can provide support, help you explain your experience, write down important things, and help you remember what was discussed in the appointment. You can ask your friend or family member to join you for some or all of the appointment.

## Be Honest

It is important to be honest with a health care professional about how you feel. What you share with them is private and they cannot tell anyone without asking you first. Tell them how you feel, when it started, and how often it happens. It is also important to share any major sources of stress or big changes that have happened in your life recently.

Below is a list of common PPD signs and symptoms. Check the boxes that relate to how you feel. You may want to show this list to your health care professional to help explain how you have been feeling.

- ☐ Feeling angry or moody
- ☐ Feeling sad or hopeless
- ☐ Feeling guilty, shameful, or worthless
- ☐ Eating more or less than usual
- ☐ Sleeping more or less than usual
- ☐ Unusual crying or sadness
- ☐ Loss of interest, joy, or pleasure in things you used to enjoy
- ☐ Withdrawing from friends and family
- ☐ Possible thoughts of harming the baby or yourself

## Ask Questions

If you have questions or concerns, you can always ask your health care professional for more information. If they suggest a treatment that you don't feel comfortable with or don't know much about, share your concerns, and ask about other treatment options. It is important to know that not every treatment works for everyone. You might need to try different treatments, or a combination, to see what works best for you. You may see more than one health care professional to find the best treatment for you.

## Resources

**Preparing for your appointment**

- National Institute on Aging: Talking with Your Doctor Worksheets

**Reproductive and mental health information**

- Office on Women's Health: Reproductive Health and Mental Health

**Medicine and pregnancy information**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Treating for Two
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Medicine and Pregnancy

**Medication and breastfeeding information**

- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development: LactMed Database
- MotherToBaby: Information about Medications in Pregnancy and Lactation

For immediate support and help you can reach out to:

**Call 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)** for 24/7 free confidential support for pregnant and new moms.

If you are in mental health distress or have a suicidal crisis, call or text the **Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** at **988** for free and confidential support.

**To learn more, visit**
**www.womenshealth.gov/talkingPPD**



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