



Mood & Anxiety Disorders Related to Childbirth

Signs & Symptoms

PMADS (Postpartum Mood and Anxiety Disorders)

Postpartum refers to the months after giving birth when physical, hormonal, emotional, and social changes occur, and the body returns to its pre-pregnancy state.

Many women experience mood changes after the baby arrives, often referred to as the 'baby blues.' During this stage, women may have mood swings and feel tearful. It typically occurs within the first week and lasts about 2-14 days. This condition is relatively common, affecting 60%-80% of women postpartum.

When symptoms last more than 14 days, you may be experiencing a form of PMADS.

- Depressed mood or severe mood swings
- Excessive crying
- Difficulty bonding with your baby
- Withdrawing from loved ones
- Change in appetite
- Change in sleep patterns
- Fatigue
- Intense irritability and anger
- Fear that you're not a good mother
- Feelings of worthlessness, shame, guilt or inadequacy
- Diminished ability to think clearly, concentrate or make decisions
- Severe anxiety and panic attacks
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide

About 15-20% of women experience PMADs. If you have mental health issues before pregnancy, you may be more likely to develop these symptoms during or after pregnancy. If you have mental health challenges, get help as soon as you know you're pregnant. PMADs need medical attention. Ask for help if you have any of these symptoms.

DEPRESSION

Some people experience depression after having a baby. It can affect both men and women. About 10% of new fathers go through mood changes after their baby is born. This is due to changes in hormones and the stress of having a new baby. It might seem like the baby blues at first, but the symptoms are stronger, last longer, and can happen even after the first few weeks.

ANXIETY

Feeling nervous, restless, on edge, not being able to stop worrying, or feeling as if something terrible might happen are signs of anxiety. When these symptoms happen after giving birth, it is called postpartum anxiety.

15 - 20% OF WOMEN EXPERIENCE A POSTPARTUM MOOD DISORDER ([NIH.gov](https://www.nih.gov))

Symptoms of anxiety can include:

- Increased heart rate
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Tightness in the chest
- Ruminating thoughts
- Difficulty sleeping
- Inability to shut off the mind
- Over-protective behavior
- Hypervigilance

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

OCD involves having persistent, repetitive thoughts or mental images (obsessions) and/or feeling the need to perform certain actions repeatedly (compulsions) to relieve the anxiety these thoughts cause. In post-partum OCD, these unwanted thoughts often focus on the baby, leading to behaviors aimed at protecting the child, like avoiding feeding for fear of poisoning or discarding objects that might harm the baby.

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS

About 9% of women will go through post-partum post-traumatic stress disorder, often triggered by real or perceived trauma during labor and delivery. Symptoms can include flashbacks or nightmares about the trauma, reliving past traumatic events, anxiety, panic attacks, and avoiding anything that reminds them of the trauma.

BIPOLAR DISORDER

Bipolar disorder involves cycles of "highs" (mania) and "lows" (depression). During the manic phase, a person might have tons of energy, talk really fast, struggle with insomnia but not feel the need for sleep, and experience racing thoughts, delusions, grandiose ideas, and sometimes even hallucinations. In the depressive phase, they might feel very low, irritable, or severely depressed. Women who already have bipolar disorder are at a higher risk of facing postpartum depression, mania, and psychosis.

PSYCHOSIS

Post-partum psychosis affects about 1-2% of new mothers and can come on quickly, usually within 2-3 days after childbirth. It involves sudden, dramatic changes like paranoid, grandiose, or bizarre delusions, disorganized behavior, hallucinations, mood swings, and confused thinking. Women with pre-existing mental health conditions are at a higher risk.

It's crucial to seek treatment as soon as symptoms appear. Treatment, which can include psychotherapy and sometimes medication from a licensed mental health clinician, helps alleviate symptoms and restore well-being.

Resources and guidance on where/how to seek help including how to access.

- **Call, text, chat 988** to reach a counselor 24/7 and connect to mental health and substance use services in over 200 languages.
- **Call the Postpartum Support International (1-800-944-4773)**
- **Call the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)**
- **Call the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene helpline for support and services for pregnant people and their families at 347-396-7979** between 9 am and 5 pm and connect with a trained health worker to receive screening/referral for support and social services that help pregnant people and their families.

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