FACT SHEET  Postpartum Depression

If you’re feeling BLUE - what you need to know.

Postpartum Depression: The Facts

“Baby blues” are very common. Sad feelings may be the result of hormonal changes or changes in lifestyle and sleeping habits. These feelings usually last for a few days to a few weeks, and almost always go away on their own. But, what if the blues aren’t going away? According to the National Women’s Health Information Center, you may be one of the 10% of women who experience postpartum depression.

Who is at risk?

Women of all ages, economic status and racial/ethnic backgrounds can be affected by postpartum depression. It can occur a few days or even months after childbirth and can last for a year or longer, if untreated. It can happen after the birth of any child, not just your first child.

What are the signs?

The signs and symptoms of postpartum depression may include:

• Feeling restless or irritable.
• Feeling sad, depressed or crying a lot.
• Having no energy.
• Having headaches, chest pains, heart palpitations (the heart beating fast and feeling like it is skipping beats), numbness, or hyperventilation (fast and shallow breathing).
• Not being able to sleep or being very tired, or both.
• Not being able to eat, and weight loss.
• Overeating, and weight gain.
• Trouble focusing, remembering, or making decisions.
• Being overly worried about the baby.
• Not having an interest in the baby.
• Feeling worthless and guilty.
• Being afraid of hurting the baby or yourself.
• No interest or pleasure in activities, including sex.

If you feel you could harm yourself or another person it is important that you talk to someone today. Call your health care provider immediately or go to the emergency room closest to you.
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How can you take care of yourself?

- Make sure you’ve scheduled your postpartum checkup with your obstetrician, gynecologist, or other health care provider.
- Ask for support from family and friends.
- Always try to nap when the baby naps.
- Stop putting pressure on yourself to do everything. Do as much as you can and ask for help with chores and nighttime feedings.
- Do not spend a lot of time alone. Get dressed, leave the house, take a walk.
- Spend time alone with your husband or partner.
- Talk to your health care provider about your concerns.
- Talk with other mothers and learn how they cope with their feelings.
- Join a support group for women with postpartum depression. Refer to your health care provider, local hospital, newspaper or telephone book for information.

How can it be treated and where can you get help?

The most important thing to remember is that postpartum depression can be successfully treated. Treatment depends on the severity of your condition. You may be prescribed antidepressant medication and undergo psychotherapy. If you’re breastfeeding, tell your doctor as well as your baby’s pediatrician, as there may be risks associated with the antidepressant medication.

You can learn more about types of treatment that are available from a mental health professional. If you wish to obtain more information, please call the mental health service number on the back of your member ID card. Tell the representative answering the phone that you may be experiencing postpartum depression and that you wish to be referred to a qualified therapist.

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is providing you this information for educational purposes only, and it does not constitute medical advice. Please consult your doctor for specific medical advice before taking any medications and before beginning any lifestyle programs.

Source: National Women’s Health Information Center, a project of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women’s Health