



Depression After Delivery (Postpartum Depression)

After the birth of a baby, hormones drop back to their pre-pregnancy levels. Hormonal changes can affect a new mother's mood, and may trigger some symptoms of depression. Other factors that contribute to depression include physical tiredness from the delivery, lack of sleep, and the demands of taking care of a new baby.

For the majority of new moms, the "baby blues" that follow childbirth are mild and don't last long. When depression lasts longer than two weeks, experts suggest consulting a doctor. This is important because when depression persists moms find it hard to provide the kind of care and emotional nurture that a baby needs.

This detailed chart can help you evaluate your own postpartum depression. If you believe your symptoms are affecting your parenting, don't hesitate to talk to your doctor, your MedCost Prenatal Program nurse, or a counselor.

(See Chart on Next Page)

| | “Baby Blues” Very common, not serious | Postpartum Depression Less common, more serious | Postpartum Psychosis Rare, very serious |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|
| Affects | About 8 out of 10 new mothers | 1 out of 10 new mothers | 1-2 out of 1,000 new mothers |
| Onset | 3-4 days after delivery | Usually shortly after delivery, but can occur anytime during the first year after birth | Usually within 2-6 weeks of delivery |
| Duration | A few days to a week | Up to 12 months | Varies |
| Symptoms May Include | Mild depression, mood swings, crying spells, irregular sleeping and eating patterns, anxiety, difficulty concentrating | Irritability, crying, sadness, mood swings, feeling overwhelmed, decreased energy, trouble thinking clearly or making decisions, exhaustion, changes in sleep patterns and/or appetite, headaches, chest pains and/or heart palpitations, isolation from others, fear of harming baby or others or self | Delusions, auditory hallucinations, bizarre behaviors and feelings, extreme agitation, rapid mood swings from depression to euphoria, sleep disturbances, anger, confusion, disorganized thoughts, irrational guilt |
| Treatment | None usually required | Medical evaluation is needed. Treatments may include anti-depressant medication and “talk therapy” such as a support group and/or counseling. | <u>Psychiatric Emergency.</u> Immediate medical attention is required. Treatment almost always includes medication. Hospitalization may be needed if there is a risk of hurting self or others. Counseling is beneficial later. |
| Tips | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nap when the baby sleeps. • Ask spouse, family members, friends to help with chores and night feedings. • Talk with other new moms. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postpone major life changes if possible. • Exercise. • Lower your expectations for housekeeping, etc. • Arrange for daytime help • Get dressed and go out to run errands, take a walk, etc. • Join a support group for women with depression. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spouse or others should ensure that prompt medical evaluation is obtained. Call 911 if necessary. |