



So, you've heard of the "baby blues," but where's the line between that and postpartum depression? Are you supposed to just feel tired and moody for the first few months? Let's break it down.

FIRST FEW WEEKS POSTPARTUM: THE MOOD SWINGS

Right after your baby is born, expect about two weeks of mood chaos. You might find yourself crying for no reason, feeling super sensitive, irritable, angry, or even oddly euphoric—sometimes all of these at once. Mood swings can be intense.

What is this? Isn't having a baby supposed to mean I'm in a cocoon of joy?

During pregnancy, your estrogen levels skyrocket. After birth, those hormone levels drop fast—like, 100 to 1,000 times lower. That's a huge shift in a very short time period. Estrogen impacts serotonin and dopamine, which are the chemicals that influence mood, anxiety, and motivation. When estrogen crashes, those neurotransmitters are left in chaos.

It takes about two weeks for things to start stabilizing. If they don't, it could be a sign of a postpartum mood or anxiety disorder.



BEYOND THE BABY BLUES

Postpartum depression isn't just something that "happens to other people." It's actually really common—1 in 5 birthing parents and 1 in 10 non-birthing parents experience it.

SIGNS TO WATCH FOR:

- Struggling to bond with your baby
- Avoiding or feeling disconnected from your baby
- Intrusive thoughts or scary visuals of something bad happening to your baby or you hurting them
- Thoughts of hurting yourself or others
- Persistent sadness
- Guilt, shame, hopelessness
- Irritability
- Trouble sleeping
- Excessive crying
- Worrying that feels out of control
- Not enjoying things you used to
- Staying up for days without feeling tired
- Seeing or hearing things that aren't there
- Feeling paranoid about people trying to harm you or your baby
- Racing thoughts

If you're experiencing any of these symptoms, ***it might be time to get checked for Postpartum Depression.***

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION: 5 IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

1. POOR SLEEP ISN'T JUST "NORMAL"

Sleep deprivation is expected after having a baby, but if you're so anxious or restless that you can't sleep even when your baby is asleep, it could be more than just exhaustion. If this continues for more than two weeks, it might be a sign of PPD.



2. YOUR MOOD IS ALL OVER THE PLACE

Cycling through irritability, sadness, anxiety, or feeling like nothing can make you happy? These emotional shifts could be red flags for PPD. You might also experience uncontrollable worry or constant hopelessness. This goes beyond the typical "baby blues."



3. FEELING DETACHED FROM YOUR BABY

PPD can make bonding with your baby feel off. If you're struggling to feel attached or feel like you don't care when you think you should, you're not alone. Guilt often creeps in, making you feel worse. Disconnection can be a sign of PPD.



4. UNWANTED, DISTURBING THOUGHTS

Unwanted or scary thoughts—like thinking about harming yourself, your baby, or someone else—are a critical sign of PPD. These intrusive thoughts can be really distressing, but they are a sign that you need support, not something you have to deal with alone.



5. OVERWHELMING GUILT

Feeling like you're not doing enough or like you're a bad parent? Guilt is often a heavy part of PPD. If you're constantly feeling like you're failing or like something is deeply wrong with you, that's a cue to talk to a provider who understands postpartum mental health.



OTHER SYMPTOMS OF POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

Fatigue

While tiredness is expected, PPD can leave you completely drained, even after rest.

Aches and Pains

Headaches, stomachaches, or muscle pain without a clear reason could be linked to your mental health.

Brain Fog

Trouble focusing, remembering things, or making decisions could be more than just "mom brain."

Feeling Numb

Emotional flatness, where nothing excites or engages you, could be a sign of PPD.

Avoidance

Isolating yourself from family or friends, or avoiding your baby, could be a red flag.

Appetite Changes

Eating way more or way less than usual can be another warning sign.

Loss of Interest in Relationships

PPD can make it hard to connect with your partner, friends, or family.

Feeling Like You Don't Belong

Feeling disconnected from people around you, especially other moms, is common. You might feel like you're the only one experiencing this.

WHAT ABOUT BIRTH TRAUMA?



Birth trauma is real. You might not even realize your birth was traumatic—maybe it happened too fast, or you had an unexpected c-section when you planned a home birth. Maybe you felt alone during pregnancy, or your baby was taken away before you could see them. Or maybe you almost lost your partner, miscarried or nearly lost your life. Birth is heavy, and these experiences can be traumatic, even if they weren't for someone else.

If you've noticed that you haven't been the same since birth—feeling constantly on edge, having nightmares, intrusive flashbacks, avoiding things you used to enjoy—it might be trauma.

This would be worth finding a therapist to work through these feelings.

POSTPARTUM PSYCHOSIS: WHEN THINGS GET REALLY INTENSE

Postpartum psychosis is much rarer than postpartum depression, but it's serious and needs immediate attention. It happens in about *1 to 2 in 1,000 births*. This condition usually shows up within the first two weeks postpartum and can escalate fast. It's not just about mood swings—it's more like a break from reality.

If you have a history of bipolar disorder, you need to talk to your loved ones and providers about looking out for these symptoms for you. You may not realize it because it shifts your brain into an irrational state,, but they should recognize it and have a plan on what to do.

Signs of Postpartum Psychosis:

- **Hallucinations:** Seeing or hearing things that aren't there
- **Delusions:** Strong beliefs not based in reality (e.g., thinking you have special powers)
- **Extreme confusion and disorientation**
- **Severe mood swings:** Much more intense than postpartum depression
- **Paranoia:** Feeling like people are out to harm you or your baby
- **Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby**

Seek Help

If you've been feeling any of these signs for more than two weeks after giving birth, it's time to talk to a provider. You don't have to navigate this alone, and the earlier you reach out, the better.

If you experience postpartum psychosis, this is an emergency and requires a visit to the emergency room immediately for treatment.

Resources for Help:

- **Find a PPD-trained provider:** www.postpartum.net
- **PPD Help Line:** 1-800-944-4773

