

Baby Blues and Postpartum Depression

While it is hoped the transition to mothering will be smooth, many new moms experience a sometimes dramatic shift in their emotional well-being. Postpartum adjustment can include wide mood swings, depression, anxiety, and in its most extreme form, loss of touch with reality. The most common problems are the baby blues and postpartum depression.

Baby Blues

- Experienced by 70 to 80 percent of all new mothers
- Onset is usually within 2 to 3 days following delivery and lasts 7 to 10 days
- Symptoms may include:

Sadness	Crying spells
Fatigue/exhaustion	Anxiety
Mood swings	Irritability
Confusion	Feeling overwhelmed
Difficulty coping	Inability to sleep, even when baby sleeps
Increased sensitivity	Loneliness

Postpartum Depression (PPD)

If the baby blues persist for more than 2 weeks or if the symptoms intensify, the condition is considered to be postpartum depression.

- Experienced by 10 to 20 percent of all new mothers
- The highest incidence of PPD occurs 4 to 8 weeks postpartum but may start anytime within the first year after birth.
- Though most women will recover within 6 to 12 months without treatment, the condition may become chronic and interfere with mother-baby attachment
- Symptoms may include all of the problems associated with the baby blues with the addition of:

Appetite changes	Difficulty concentrating or remembering things
Indecisiveness	Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
Anger, agitation	Obsessive thoughts or fears
Loss of control	Lack of interest in usual activities
Wanting to run away	Loss of the ability to experience pleasure
Feeling disconnected	Lack of concern with personal appearance
Disturbing thoughts	Fears or thoughts of hurting yourself or your baby

Postpartum Psychosis

This is the most extreme form of postpartum adjustment reaction and occurs very rarely.

- Experienced by 1 or 2 mothers per 1,000 births
- Onset can be immediate following delivery or occur within the first several months
- Treatment must be sought immediately as a woman's condition may deteriorate rapidly
- Symptoms may or may not include those of postpartum depression along with any or all of the following:

Extreme agitation	Extreme irritability
Irrationality	Inability to care for self or baby
Sleeplessness	Delusions and/or hallucinations
Impulsiveness	Suicidal thought or plans
Thoughts of hurting your baby	

If you are not feeling like yourself following the birth of your baby and wonder if you may be suffering from a postpartum reaction, call for a telephone consultation or an appointment for a complete evaluation. Paula Tanis is state licensed and nationally certified in counseling and has a background in maternal-child health nursing.

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