

# Postpartum depression fact sheet

**Question:** I am about to give birth, should I be concerned about postpartum depression?

**Answer:** Only 10% to 15% of women experience postpartum depression, which is different from the “baby blues.” Unless you have a history of depression, you shouldn’t feel overly anxious. Throughout the nine months of pregnancy your hormonal level gradually increases. After delivery, dramatic changes in hormones can affect a new mother’s mood, resulting in feelings of sadness also known as “baby blues.” The “baby blues” can begin soon after giving birth and usually peak four to five days following delivery. At least 50% to 80% of new moms are affected and the blues typically go away on their own after a week or two.

**Question:** How do I know if I am experiencing “baby blues” or having symptoms of postpartum depression?

**Answer:** Postpartum depression is distinguished from “baby blues” by time of onset and severity and persistence of symptoms. Usually beginning two to three weeks after giving birth, as opposed to the more immediate and brief occurrence of “baby blues,” postpartum depression can last for months if untreated.

You may be at greater risk for developing postpartum depression if you have a history of depression, have recently experienced a stressful life event, have experienced postpartum depression with a previous birth or have a family history of mood disorders.

## Postpartum depression symptoms:

depressed mood/anxiety/sadness  
irritability  
sleeplessness  
self-doubt about child care ability  
loss of interest in infant  
unrelenting fatigue  
loss of appetite  
inability to cope

**Question:** What should I do if I have symptoms?

If you are:

1. unable to laugh or enjoy humor
2. not looking forward to things with enjoyment
3. blaming yourself when things go wrong
4. anxious/worried/scared or panicky without a valid reason
5. overwhelmed and unable to cope with demands
6. so unhappy you have difficulty sleeping
7. feeling sad or miserable
8. crying for unknown reason
9. thinking of harming yourself



**If you have any of the above symptoms, immediately call your primary care physician or obstetrician! Do not be embarrassed or reluctant to seek help.**

During the postpartum check-up, your obstetrician may ask specific questions to assess how you are coping. The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale is a helpful tool in determining if a new mother is in need of therapy, medication or both.

Please call (781) 979-3642 to speak with one of the Hallmark Health Maternal Newborn Social Workers. Laura Sternberger, LICSW and Penny Cappalli, LCSW are available to assist new mothers with questions and concerns related to post-partum depression or other social service issues.