

If you feel that you may harm yourself or others, call 911 right away.

Postpartum Mood Changes

After any pregnancy, a woman's hormone level drops quickly as her body adjusts to no longer being pregnant. This occurs whenever a pregnancy ends including:

- Following miscarriage
- After delivery (vaginal or C-Section)
- Post-surgery (D&C or D&E)

Regardless of the length of pregnancy, the sudden change in hormone level may cause mood changes. The two most common types of postpartum mood changes are:

- Postpartum Blues
- Postpartum Depression

Postpartum Blues (“Baby Blues”) affect about 60% to 80% of women and symptoms often begin 3 to 5 days after the pregnancy ends. Women may not “feel like themselves,” and common symptoms may include feeling:

- Sad
- Overwhelmed
- Irritable
- Insecure
- Nervous
- Emotional

These feelings may go away as time passes. If these signs persist for more than 2 weeks, contact your doctor.

Postpartum Depression (PPD) affects about one in 7 to 10 women. PPD often occurs in the first two months after the end of pregnancy. A woman's risk for PPD increases if she:

- Has a personal or family history of depression or anxiety (or mental illness),
- Has poor/no social supports
- Is undergoing other stressful life events (e.g. family illness or death; separation/divorce; change in/loss of job, etc.).

If a woman's pregnancy ends in loss (miscarriage, termination, stillbirth, etc.), her risk for PPD also increases.

Symptoms of PPD may include:

- Sadness/Depressed mood
- Tearfulness
- Loss of interest in usual activities/persons
- Major changes in appetite and/or sleep
- Exhaustion/fatigue (even if able to sleep)
- Extreme guilt and/or anxiety
- Problems concentrating and/or poor memory
- Panic attacks (e.g. numbness/tingling in arms/legs, chest pain, heart palpitations)
- Feelings of hopelessness and/or lack of self-worth
- Thoughts of harm to self (e.g. suicide) or others

If you, or someone you know, have these signs, contact the doctor right away.

If the symptoms worsen and you feel that you are at risk of harm to yourself or others, go to the nearest emergency room or call 911 right away.

Treatment options may include counseling, medications (or both), and/or hormone treatment.

Always remember, you are not alone. Help is available. Postpartum depression can be treated. There are trained staff who are just a phone call away.

Evanston Northwestern Healthcare's Perinatal Depression Hotline may be accessed by calling 1-866-364-6667.

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.

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