

*Healthy New Moms: Maryland's Campaign to End Depression During & After Pregnancy* is an outreach campaign funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau to increase awareness of the signs and symptoms of perinatal depression, provide information on local resources and help women find timely and appropriate care.

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# Depression & New Moms



Adapted from "About Postpartum Depression," Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (11/2004) with collaboration and support from the Family Health Administration and the Mental Hygiene Administration, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.



*Depression affects one out of every eight new mothers. Depression can be treated. Getting help means you are looking out for your family and yourself.*

■ For information and free materials  
[www.healthynewmoms.org](http://www.healthynewmoms.org)

■ 1-800-PPD-MOMS (1-800-773-6667)  
Call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

## Could I Be Depressed?

Sometimes the feelings during pregnancy and after giving birth are like the symptoms of depression. Feeling sad or “blue” after giving birth is common, but when these feelings last two weeks or longer, they may be a sign of depression. Other health problems such as thyroid disease and bipolar disorder can cause many of the same symptoms but need a different treatment.

Having several signs or symptoms, for two weeks or more, may mean you have depression. You should talk to your doctor, nurse or social worker. Take this brochure with you.



## Warning Signs and Symptoms of Depression:

- Feeling very sad, anxious or cranky
- Frequent crying
- Not feeling up to doing daily tasks
- Not feeling hungry, or eating when not hungry
- Not wanting to take care of yourself (dress, shower, fix hair)
- Trouble sleeping when tired, or sleeping too much
- Things don't seem fun or interesting anymore
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling hopeless
- Trouble making decisions
- Worrying too much about the baby or not caring about the baby
- Fear of harming or being alone with the baby
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

## You are not alone!

Depression is the most common complication of pregnancy. Treatment can make a big difference. Sadly, most women never get the help they need. Getting help right away can prevent more serious problems later.

## Treatment

Depression that is not treated can lead to risks for the mother and baby.

Untreated depression in pregnant women can lead to poor nutrition, missed prenatal appointments, drinking and smoking. These behaviors can cause premature birth, low birth weight and other problems. A woman who develops depression while she is pregnant is three times as likely to be depressed after giving birth.

Mothers with depression may find it hard to deal with daily life and stress. Women who are depressed often do not feel like taking



care of themselves or their babies. Their babies may develop learning or behavior problems. Women with depression are also at risk for suicide.

Medications used to treat depression work very well. It is natural for mothers to be concerned about the effects of medication on the fetus and breast milk. It is important to consider the risks. It is also important to consider the risks to the mother, the fetus and the baby if the mother does not receive treatment for depression.

Going off antidepressant medication may make depression return. If you are taking an antidepressant medication, talk to your health care provider if you are planning a pregnancy and as soon as you learn that you are pregnant. Only you and your doctor can decide what medicine, if any, is best for you.

Counseling also helps. For some women, it may be all that is needed. For others, it can be used along with the medication the doctor prescribes. Family, friends, helplines and support groups can also help.

Talk to your health provider. Together, you can choose a treatment plan that is right for you.

## Resources

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