

Signs of Postpartum Depression

PREGNANCY, MOTHERHOOD MALAYSIA

ARTICLE

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How then do you know if it's postpartum depression or just a case of postpartum 'baby blues'?

Signs of Postpartum Depression

So, you've just given birth and while you know you should be over the moon you can't help but feel like a hot mess inside. One minute you're feeling like you're on top of the world, and the next, you're bawling your eyes out because of the slightest trigger. Is it just hormones? Will you ever feel better? Why does it feel like there's a dark cloud over everything?

While some hormonal mood swings are normal after pregnancy, sometimes they might be a sign of something more like postpartum depression. Let's take a look at the differences between the "baby blues" and postpartum depression, and what you can do to help yourself.

Is it Postpartum 'Depression' or Postpartum 'Baby Blues'?

Going through pregnancy and childbirth is a big change in life, and it can be normal to feel moody and overwhelmed especially when your body is adjusting with the drops in hormone levels after delivery. Coupled with the constant lack of sleep from overnight feeding and tending to all the crying, it can certainly affect you emotionally. So how then do you know if it's postpartum depression or just a case of postpartum 'baby blues'?

'Baby Blues'

One moment you're feeling like you'll burst with joy, and the next moment, you're bursting out crying and feeling the worst. It's the postpartum 'baby blues' when your mood swings from happy to sad at any time. Don't worry, it's not your fault and you are not alone. Up to 80% of new mums go through this after delivery, with hormones thought to be largely at blame. The hormonal changes you go through during pregnancy and then childbirth may produce chemical changes in the brain that result in feelings of overwhelm, irritability and depression. You may also feel exhausted and don't feel like eating or taking care of yourself. These feelings usually start 2 to 3 days after delivery and peaks in the first week. Thankfully, you'll feel better after a week or two.

Signs of Postpartum 'baby blues':

1. Frequent mood swings
2. Feelings of overwhelm and irritability
3. Exhaustion and lack of appetite and self-care
4. Peaks in the first week, but usually feels better after 1 to 2 weeks

Postpartum Depression

Postpartum depression is a longer-lasting, more severe feeling of gloom. You find yourself crying often and have an overwhelming despair that you can't eat, can't sleep, or can't even take care of your little one. It makes you feel like you're not doing a good job as a mum, and you find it really hard to bond with your child. If you find yourself feeling hopeless, worthless and alone, or having anxiety and panic attacks, you are more likely to be going through postpartum depression than the postpartum 'baby blues'. Postpartum depression lasts longer than two weeks and gets worse as time progresses instead of better. The risk of postpartum depression also increases if you have a family history of depression.

Signs of Postpartum 'baby blues':

1. Overwhelming feelings of despair and crying often
2. Lack of appetite and insomnia

3. Not bonding with the little one
4. Feel hopeless, worthless and alone
5. Anxiety and panic attacks
6. Feeling stressed
7. Lasts longer than 2 weeks and gets worse as time progresses
8. A family history of depression

What can I do?

Navigating life changes with a new addition to the family can take a lot of adjusting. Give yourself some grace and allow your body to slowly heal before taking on more responsibilities. It is also important to find your support system that you can reach out to whenever you're feeling down.

Here are some things you can do to elevate your mood whenever the blues strike:

1. Sleep

We know how rough the first couple of weeks can be, but do try to get as much rest as possible during this period. When sleep deprivation starts affecting you, do seek and accept help from others so that you can get a longer stretch of rest.

2. Eat

While it's tempting to skip meals when you're so preoccupied with the little one, do remember that your mood can be easily affected when your body does not have enough nourishment. Eating regularly will help stabilise your blood sugar too, which can help prevent you from feeling tired, irritable or depressed.

3. Go outdoors

Having a little one doesn't mean you'll have to be stuck indoors all the time. Take a short walk outside around your block, or at a nearby park. The fresh air and sunlight in the outdoors can help make you feel lighter and happier.

4. Focus on you

Trying to juggle so many things at once can be overwhelming, especially when you're trying to adjust to life with a new addition. For the first few weeks, forget about chores and just focus on you and your child as you learn about one another and bond with each other.

If these feelings of sadness do not seem to go away and get too heavy to bear, please do reach out to your family and friends or seek medical care as soon as possible.

References:

<https://www.webmd.com/depression/postpartum-depression/postpartum-depression-baby-blues>

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