

Warning signs of baby blues and postpartum depression

After delivery, many women experience **baby blues**. The onset is usually within three to four days after delivery; symptoms typically subside within two weeks. These symptoms are believed to be caused by the sudden shift in hormones following delivery and the exhaustion and sleep deprivation that often accompanies the delivery and your role as a parent.

The symptoms of the baby blues may include, but are not limited to:

- Mild depression.
- Sudden mood swings.
- Unpredictable crying spells.
- Irregular sleeping and eating patterns.
- Irritability, restlessness, or anxiety.
- Difficulty concentrating.

The symptoms, while unappealing, shouldn't be severe or intense. Symptoms that persist beyond two to three weeks after delivery may be an indication of postpartum depression; consult your physician promptly.

Postpartum depression

This is a type of major depression that affects an estimated one out of 10 new mothers. This depression can occur anytime within the first year after delivery, but the onset is usually within the first six weeks. Unlike the baby blues, the symptoms of postpartum depression will be severe, affect your well-being and disrupt your ability to function. You won't be able to resolve these feelings without intervention. If you experience any of the additional symptoms below, notify your doctor immediately:

- Obsessive thoughts.
- Hopelessness.
- Fear of being alone.
- Feeling worthless or guilty.
- Lack of interest in holding, interacting with, or caring for your baby.
- Thoughts of harming yourself, your baby or your partner.
- Withdrawal from family or friends.
- Lack of energy and/or motivation to maintain physical hygiene.
- Loss of interest in activities you once found enjoyable.
- Physical symptoms: headaches, chest pains, hyperventilation, heart palpitations.

It's important that you communicate and not feel embarrassed or ashamed of postpartum depression. It is treatable.