

Your Emotions After Delivery



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

Changes in your emotions

Your body needs time to adjust from delivery and hormones that are going back to pre-pregnancy levels. While many women have some mild mood changes during or after delivery, 15 to 20% have more serious signs of depression or anxiety.

For the next 2 weeks, it is normal to have any of the following:

- Less of an appetite
- Feelings of being overwhelmed
- Crying for no reason
- Restlessness
- Anxiety or nervousness
- Problems concentrating
- Mood swings
- Tiredness
- Being irritable
- Problems sleeping
- Being impatient



Tips for coping

To cope with these emotional changes, remember to take breaks and rest. It may also help to:

- Accept help from family or friends for meals or cleaning.
- Take a break and go out for dinner or a movie, enjoy a carry out meal, or meet a friend for lunch.
- Talk about your feelings with someone you trust.
- Get outside for a few minutes every day, even if you just sit outside or take a walk.
- Find time for yourself to take a bath, or something else you enjoy for at least 15 minutes a day.
- Eat a healthy diet. Eat small meals more often, rather than 2 or 3 large meals.
- Don't hesitate to talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner, or nurse midwife about how you feel.

How Others Can Help You

Ask your support person (a family member or friend) to learn more about what you are going through and how to help you. Examples of ways they can help you are:

- Encourage you to rest as much as possible.
- Take you seriously and listen to your concerns.

- Go to the doctor or therapist with you to get more information about how to support you.
- Help you set limits on what you can do right now.
- Sit with you when you are feeling bad.
- Give you permission to do things to take care of yourself during this time.
- Make sure they have support for themselves, are eating well, and are rested.

When it is more serious

It is normal to have these types of feelings after delivery. If these last more than 2 weeks, talk to your health care provider to find out if you may have a **perinatal mood disorder**. Symptoms can appear any time during pregnancy and in the first year after delivery. Listed here are the general types and their possible symptoms.

Postpartum Depression symptoms may include:

- Feeling angry or irritable
- Lack of interest in the baby
- Appetite and sleep problems
- Crying and sadness
- Feelings of guilt, shame, or hopelessness
- Loss of interest, joy, or pleasure in things you used to enjoy
- Possible thoughts of harming the baby or yourself

Postpartum Anxiety symptoms may include:

- Constant worry
- Feeling that something bad is going to happen
- Racing thoughts
- Sleep and appetite problems
- Not able to sit still
- Physical symptoms like dizziness, hot flashes, and nausea

Perinatal Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder symptoms may include:

- Repetitive, upsetting, and unwanted thoughts or mental images
- A need to do certain things over and over to reduce anxiety from these thoughts

Postpartum Stress Disorder is often caused by a traumatic delivery. Symptoms may include:

- Flashbacks of the trauma
- Feelings of anxiety
- A need to avoid things related to the event
- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Feeling detached or that things seem unreal

Postpartum Psychosis symptoms may include:

- Seeing or hearing voices or images others can't see or hear
- Feeling very energetic and unable to sleep
- Believing things are not true and not trusting people around you

Postpartum psychosis is rare and can be dangerous. Help is needed right away.

Getting treatment

Talk to your health care provider and seek treatment if you have any signs of a perinatal mood or anxiety disorder. Do not be embarrassed, feel guilty, or blame yourself. Many women do not know the signs or don't think it can happen to them. Share your symptoms and ask to be seen as soon as possible.

Resources and More Information

POEM (Perinatal Outreach and Education for Moms)

614-315-8989

They can answer your questions and provide you with support and referral information.

Post Partum Support International

www.postpartum.net or 1-800-944-4PPD (4773)

Online information, resources, and help line.

If you feel like harming yourself or your baby, it is important to seek help right away.

Go to the nearest emergency department or call for help.

Resources include:

- Ohio State Emergency Department - 614-293-8333 (main campus)
- Ohio State Emergency Department at University Hospital East - 614-257-2032
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255
- Netcare Access - 614-276-2273

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.