



WellMama Pregnancy & Postpartum Support

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Your Emotional Health During Pregnancy and Postpartum: What Every Woman Should Know

Most books and magazines are filled with images of motherhood equaling fulfillment and happiness. We want you to know that although this image will likely be a part of your experience as a parent, *for many women it does not accurately portray the reality of pregnancy and early parenting.*

Your emotional health during this time is extremely important. Below is a list of distressing emotional reactions many women experience during pregnancy and the first year after childbirth.

- **Baby Blues**- Signs include weepiness, irritability, feeling overwhelmed, and exhausted. Resolves or dramatically improves with the first three weeks after childbirth. Up to 80% of women will experience the Baby Blues.
- **Depression/Anxiety**- Symptoms include feeling anxious, agitated, sleeping too much or not at all, excessive worry, irritability, anger, guilt & shame, feeling disconnected from the family or baby, appetite changes, difficulty concentrating, and possible thoughts of harming the baby or oneself.
- **Panic**- Signs include feeling worried, anxious, or very nervous most of the time. Recurring panic attacks, which may include heart palpitations, dizziness, tingling, shortness of breath, chest pain, nausea, vomiting, or and fear of going crazy or dying.
- **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder**- Can occur during pregnancy or following a traumatic childbirth. Usually involves distressing memories, irritability, difficulty sleeping, nightmares, hypervigilance, emotional numbness, and efforts to avoid reminders of the trauma. Symptoms may be related to a prior traumatic experience or the birth itself.
- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder**- Symptoms include intrusive and disturbing thoughts and/or images of harm coming to the baby as well as a sense of horror about having these thoughts. Usually includes a preoccupation with keeping the baby safe through repetitive actions to reduce the fear and obsessions. *Women disturbed by these thoughts are very unlikely to ever act on them.*
- **Postpartum Psychosis**- Usually occurs suddenly within the first few days or weeks after birth. Includes having strange beliefs, hallucinations, irritability and agitation, inability to sleep, rapid mood changes, and poor decision making. *Women with psychosis are usually not disturbed by the nature of their thoughts or find them unusual. Women with psychosis are at significant risk for harming themselves and/or their infants, and need immediate crisis intervention.*
- **For women with bi-polar disorder.** Women with bi-polar disorder are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing psychosis, particularly if they are not taking medication and are greatly sleep-deprived. It is important to develop a wellness plan with a practitioner familiar with postpartum illnesses and get adequate support.
- If you are experiencing any of the symptoms listed above, remember that **you are not alone, you are not to blame, and with treatment, you will feel like yourself again.** These are symptoms of common and treatable medical conditions. There is help!

Please contact Postpartum Support International at 1-800-944-4773 or WellMama at 1-800-896-0410 for free support and information on getting help