

Depression Among Women

Depression and postpartum depression are common and treatable. If you think you have depression or postpartum depression, seek treatment from your health care provider as soon as possible.

Depression

Everyone feels sad sometimes, but these feelings usually pass within a few days. Depression interferes with daily life and may last for weeks or months at a time. Most people, even those with the most severe forms of depression, can get better with treatment.

Postpartum Depression

Postpartum depression is depression that occurs after having a baby. Feelings of postpartum depression are more intense and last longer than those of "baby blues," a term used to describe the worry, sadness, and tiredness many women experience after having a baby. "Baby blues" symptoms typically resolve on their own within a few days.

How Many Women Experience Depression and Postpartum Depression?

Depression is a common and serious illness. A CDC study shows that about 1 in 10 women in the United States reported symptoms that suggest they experienced an episode of major depression in the last year. CDC research shows about 1 in 8 women with a recent live birth experience symptoms of postpartum depression. Estimates of the number of women affected by postpartum depression differ by age, race/ethnicity, and state.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected mental health. Many people are experiencing grief and facing challenges that can be stressful and overwhelming. To find information about taking care of your mental health and coping with stress and grief, visit your member portal.

Symptoms of Depression

Depression doesn't feel the same for everyone. How often symptoms occur, how long they last, and how intense they may feel can be different for each person.

Symptoms of depression can include:

- Lasting sad, anxious, or "empty" mood.
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism.
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness.
- Feelings of irritability or restlessness.
- Loss of interest in hobbies and activities.
- Loss of energy.
- Problems concentrating, recalling details, and making decisions.
- Difficulty falling asleep or sleeping too much.
- Overeating or loss of appetite.
- Thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts.
- Aches or pains that do not get better with treatment.

Symptoms of Postpartum Depression

How often postpartum depression symptoms occur, how long they last, and how intense they feel can be different for each person. The symptoms of postpartum depression are similar to symptoms for depression, but may also include:

- Crying more often than usual.
- Feelings of anger.
- Withdrawing from loved ones.
- Feeling numb or disconnected from your baby.
- Worrying that you will hurt the baby.
- Feeling guilty about not being a good mom or doubting your ability to care for the baby.

Risk Factors for Depression or Postpartum Depression

Experiences that may put some women at a higher risk for depression can include:

- Stressful life events.
- Low social support.
- Previous history of depression.
- Family history of depression.
- Difficulty getting pregnant.
- Being a mom to multiples, like twins or triplets.
- Being a teen mom.
- Preterm (before 37 weeks) labor and delivery.
- Pregnancy and birth complications.

Postpartum depression can also occur among women with a healthy pregnancy and birth.

Treatment

Depression is treatable, and most people get better with treatment. If you think you may be depressed, the first step to seeking treatment is to talk to your health care provider. You can ask your health care provider for a referral to a mental health professional or call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP offers assessment, counseling and referral to appropriate resources.

Source: Division of Reproductive Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Depression Among Women. Retrieved January 30, 2023 from CDC.gov.