

## [I Just Had a Baby And Am Depressed: Do I Need Counseling? From Lake in the Hills and Huntley, IL](#)

The normal baby blues can happen in the days right after childbirth and normally disappear within a few days to a week. As a new mother, you can routinely have mood swings, sadness, crying spells, loss of appetite, sleeping problems or feel irritable, restless, anxious and lonely.

Usually, these symptoms are not severe and treatment is not needed. However, there are things you can do to feel better. Nap when the baby does. Ask for help from your spouse, family members and friends. Join a support group of new moms or talk with other moms.

Postpartum depression is not normal, however and can happen anytime within the first year after childbirth. You may have a number of symptoms such as extreme sadness, lack of energy, trouble concentrating, a lot of anxiety and feelings of guilt and worthlessness.

The difference between postpartum depression and the normal baby blues is that postpartum depression will often significantly impair your well-being and keep you from functioning well for longer periods of time. Postpartum depression needs to be treated by a psychologist or physician. Also, counseling, support groups, and medicines can help.

Postpartum psychosis is the most serious emotional condition that can afflict a new mother; However, it is rare. Fortunately, it occurs in only 1 or 2 out of every 1000 births and it usually begins in the first 6 weeks after birth.

If you have been diagnosed with bipolar or schizoaffective disorder, you are likely to have a higher risk for developing postpartum psychosis. Symptoms may include delusions, hallucinations, sleep disturbances and obsessive worries about your baby. You may also experience rapid mood swings; from depression to irritability to euphoria.

What should I do if I have symptoms of depression during pregnancy or after childbirth?

You may be reluctant to tell anyone about your symptoms because you may feel embarrassed, ashamed or even guilty about feeling depressed when you are supposed to be happy. You may worry that you will be viewed as an unfit parent.

However, perinatal depression can happen to any woman. It does not mean you are a bad or not together mom; you and your baby do not have to suffer. There is help.

There are different types of individual and talk therapies that can help you if you have perinatal depression; they can help you feel better and do better as a mom. Also, many women with perinatal depression improve when treated with anti-depressant medicine.

Your physician, counselor or psychologist can help you learn more about these options and help you decide which approach is best for you and your baby. Speak to your doctor, psychologist or midwife if you are having symptoms of depression while you are pregnant or after you deliver your baby.

They can give you a questionnaire to test for depression and can also refer you to a mental health professional who is an expert.

Here are some other helpful tips:

1. Get as much rest as you can. Try to nap when the baby naps.
2. Stop putting pressure on yourself to do everything. Do as much as you can and leave the rest!
3. Ask for help with household chores and nighttime feedings. Ask your husband or partner to bring the baby to you so you can breastfeed. If you can, have a friend, family member, or professional support person help you in the home for part of the day.
4. Talk to your husband, partner, family, and friends about how you are feeling.
5. Do not spend a lot of time alone. Get dressed and leave the house. Run an errand or take a short walk.
6. Spend time alone with your husband or partner.
7. Talk with other mothers, so you can learn from their experiences.

8. Join a support group for women with depression. Call a local hotline or look in your telephone book for information and services.

9. Do not make any major life changes during pregnancy. Major changes can cause unneeded stress. Sometimes big changes cannot be avoided. When that happens, try to arrange support and help in your new situation ahead of time.

There are two common types of treatment for depression:

1. Talk therapy. This involves talking to a therapist, psychologist, or social worker to learn to change how depression makes you think, feel, and act.

2. Medicine. Your doctor can give you an antidepressant medicine to help you. These medicines can help relieve the symptoms of depression.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, talk with your doctor about the advantages and risks of taking these medicines. Some women are concerned that taking these medicines may harm the baby.

However, a mother's depression can affect her baby's development, so getting treatment is important for both mother and baby. The risks of taking medicine have to be weighed against the risks of depression.

It is a decision that you need to discuss carefully with your doctor. If you decide to take antidepressant medicine, talk to your doctor about which ones are safer to take while pregnant or breastfeeding.

What effects can untreated depression have?

Depression not only hurts you, but also affects your family. Also, some researchers have found that depression during pregnancy can raise your risk of delivering an underweight or premature infant.

Also, if depressed, you may have difficulty caring for yourself during pregnancy. You may have trouble eating and may not gain enough weight; have trouble sleeping; may miss prenatal visits; may not follow medical instructions; have a poor diet; or may use harmful substances, like tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs.

Postpartum depression can affect your ability to parent, as well. You may lack energy, have trouble concentrating, be irritable and may even not be able to meet your baby's needs for love and affection.

As a result, you may end up feeling guilty and lose confidence in yourself as a mother, which can worsen your depression. Some researchers believe that postpartum depression can affect the infant by causing delays in language development, impaired emotional bonding, behavioral problems, lower activity levels, sleep problems and abnormal levels of distress.

It can help if the father or another caregiver can assist in meeting the needs of your baby and any other children in the family while you are depressed.

All children deserve the chance to have a healthy mom and you deserve the chance to enjoy your life and your children.

Do not suffer alone. If you are experiencing symptoms of depression during pregnancy or after having your baby, please tell a loved one and call your doctor, midwife or a psychologist right away.

## About the Author

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