

Signs and symptoms

Postnatal depression

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Postnatal depression is the term used for depression that some women experience during pregnancy or in the first year after having a baby.

Symptoms may start as [baby blues](#) and then get worse. They may take some time to develop or they may come on very fast. You may develop symptoms at any point in the first year.

Postnatal depression can last for a number of months. If not treated, it can last much longer. The earlier it is recognised, diagnosed, and treated, the quicker you will recover.

Postnatal depression happens within the first year of giving birth in 10 to 15% of women. It is much more common than [postpartum psychosis](#).

Symptoms of postnatal depression

Postnatal depression can have a broad range of symptoms. These can vary in how severe they are.

You may be feeling sad, anxious and alone. You may be feeling guilty, irritable and angry. You may be experiencing panic attacks. You may not enjoy being with people, even your baby.

You may have overwhelming fears, for example about your baby dying. Some mothers have recurring thoughts about harming their baby. Very few mothers ever act on this.

Other symptoms of postnatal depression include:

- loss of appetite
- poor concentration
- tiredness all the time

- problems sleeping
- being agitated
- crying easily

Feelings and thoughts you might experience include:

- feeling inadequate
- feeling panicked
- feeling rejected by your baby
- worrying a lot about your baby

Get help if you have symptoms


Do not let worrying thoughts you may have about your baby stop you from seeking help. Treatment is available.

The vast majority of women with postnatal depression are treated at home with their baby.

Contact your GP, midwife or public health nurse (PHN) urgently if:

- you have thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

Go to an emergency department (ED) if you cannot get an urgent appointment.

 [Find an emergency department](#)

Get help from your GP or public health nurse (PHN) if:

- you have symptoms of postnatal depression that have lasted for more than 2 weeks

You may be referred to a perinatal mental health service if this is available in your maternity hospital.

You can also contact your maternity hospital to check what supports are available for your mental health.

Your family and friends may notice that you have postnatal depression before you do. If they mention this to you, take it seriously and seek help from your GP or public health nurse.

[Things you can do to help postnatal depression](#)

Screening for postnatal depression

Public health nurses will carry out a screening for postnatal depression. This generally happens at the first visit after birth.

Depending on the outcome, they may do a follow up screening with you. They will tell you what support is available in your area.

If you are worried about feeling depressed, you should visit your GP.

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