

Postpartum Blues/Depression/Anxiety: How to Tell The Difference

Baby Blues are that “let down”, “tears-for-no-reason”, anxious, irritable array of feelings that come and go the first week or two after your baby is born. Most new Moms experience them to some degree and they resolve spontaneously.

Postpartum Depression occurs in about 10 percent of new Moms and is a more serious situation. It may occur within days or weeks of your birth or up to one year after the birth. A partner or loved one may see these symptoms before the Mom herself.

Please Seek Help From Your Midwife or Healthcare Provider if Any of These Signs Occur:

- Fatigue, sleeplessness, exhaustion
- Feeling sad, hopeless, guilty, inadequate
- Overly concerned about your baby’s welfare - maybe even afraid to let your partner care for the baby
- Lack of interest in the baby
- Crying, confusion, poor concentration, memory loss
- Loss of appetite or no interest in food

Postpartum Anxiety/Obsessive Compulsive Disorder can occur after the birth of your baby and is when a new Mom becomes extremely anxious. This anxiety feels like extreme fears, rapid breathing and heart rates, shakiness, and feelings of impending doom. Rarely, the anxiety may be felt with intrusive thoughts and repetitive thoughts, and/or avoidant behaviors (fears of harming the baby therefore staying away from the baby to protect him). These thoughts and feelings are very frightening and out of character for this Mom.

These disorders have been linked to rapidly changing or imbalanced hormones, poor support systems, stressful relationship with partner, a history of depression, anxiety, or other emotional problems, and a history of childhood abuse. Unfortunately, complete knowledge and understanding of these serious disorders is not yet available. However, symptoms may vary from day to day, from mild to severe, and are treatable with skilled professional help.

Your midwife or other health care professional can discuss these feelings with you and help you find the support you need during this important transition. Treatment is available and effective, especially with early intervention.