

Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders

After childbirth, many moms experience a brief period of changes in their mood, sleep patterns, and eating habits. These “baby blues” tend to subside within the first two weeks postpartum. Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADs) are different, and more serious, than the “baby blues.” PMADs persist beyond the first two weeks and the symptoms are more severe.

Postpartum Depression (PPD) is the most well-known of these disorders. Bipolar disorder, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive behavior, and post-traumatic stress can also be related to pregnancy and the postpartum period. These disorders are common, affecting about 1 in 8 expectant and new mothers. PMADs are treatable, most often with counseling and medication. Support for women experiencing PMADs is critical.

Causes

The hormonal changes you experience during and after pregnancy are believed to play a major role in the development of PMADs. These changes can affect how your brain functions.

Symptoms

PMADs symptoms are different for every woman. If you experience some of the following symptoms for two weeks or more during pregnancy or within the first year after your baby’s birth, it is very possible you are experiencing a PMAD.

- Anxiety, nervousness, fearfulness
- Sadness, excessive crying, inability to laugh
- Feeling hopeless, helpless, or worthless
- Extreme agitation or tenseness, severe mood swings
- Confusion or inability to make decisions
- Lack of interest in your baby or others, lack of energy
- Sleeplessness or exhaustion, changes in appetite
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

Risk Factors

- Personal or family history of depression, anxiety, or other mental illness
- Lack of family or social support
- Fertility issues
- Giving birth to multiples, a premature baby, or a seriously ill baby
- Experiencing a traumatic birth

Resources

[Postpartum Support International](http://postpartum.net) 1-800-944-4772 postpartum.net

[Dawn Moore, CNM, PMHNP](mailto:Dawn.Moore@thebirthcenter.com)

at The Birth Center: 302-658-2229

through Sunrise Mental Health Midwifery: sunrisementalhealthandmidwifery.com

[Alopocas Collaborative Care](http://alapocascollaborativecare.com) 302-295-1088 alapocascollaborativecare.com

[Aurora Counseling](mailto:gretchena@auroracounselingde.com) 302-514-3800 gretchena@auroracounselingde.com

[Christiana Care Center for Womens Emotional Wellness](http://christianacarecenter.com) 302-733-6662

[Embodied Counseling and Wellness](http://embodiedcounselingandwellness.com) 302-797-1233 embodiedcw.com

Lactation at The Birth Center

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