

POSTPARTUM MENTAL HEALTH: RECOGNIZING WHEN A NEW PARENT NEEDS HELP

The postpartum period can bring major physical, emotional, hormonal, financial, and relationship changes. Sleep disruption and the demands of caring for a baby can intensify stress. While emotional ups and downs can occur after birth, persistent or severe symptoms deserve attention.

What to notice or do:

- Watch for ongoing sadness, severe anxiety, panic, hopelessness, intense guilt, agitation, or feeling disconnected from the baby or from yourself.
- Take statements such as “They would be better off without me,” or thoughts of self-harm or suicide seriously.
- Notice whether fear, intrusive thoughts, or distress are making it difficult to sleep even when there is an opportunity, eat, function, or care for daily needs.
- Offer practical help alongside emotional support: meals, transportation, child care, appointment support, or simply staying nearby.
- Encourage contact with an OB-GYN, primary care clinician, mental health professional, or another trusted health care provider.



Keep in mind: Postpartum mental health concerns are treatable. Asking for help is an important health step, not a measure of someone’s ability or love as a parent.

Urgent changes such as extreme confusion, severe agitation, hallucinations, delusions, or behavior that seems disconnected from reality require immediate medical attention. When safety is in question, do not leave the person alone while arranging urgent help.