



E-NEWS

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Postpartum Support International Georgia Chapter is here to provide free education on our Facebook Live events, providers who specialize in perinatal Mental Health, free online support groups and more.

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SAVE THE DATE

32nd Annual GPA
Conference

You are not alone, you are not to blame, and with help you will feel better.

Pregnant and New Moms: Are You Having a Hard Time? You Deserve Support

Becoming a mother is a huge transition, and, with, come an incredible range of emotional responses. Some are known as the “baby blues,” a two-week period of mood swings and a feeling of overwhelm after delivery. Others can happen in pregnancy, begin or last longer than two weeks after delivery, or are more intense than the baby blues. These symptoms and conditions are called perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADS). They affect as many as 1 in 5 moms (twice as many as gestational diabetes) and are completely treatable.

If you are struggling or not feeling like yourself, it's time for you to get the help you need to feel better.

How Do I Know If It's More Than The Baby Blues?

The “blues,” are characterized by weepiness, intense highs and lows in your mood, as well as a general feeling of being overwhelmed, and having a low frustration tolerance or even anger. They are caused by the drop in hormones that happens immediately after giving birth. If you experience those symptoms longer than two weeks, they begin after two weeks and anytime in the year after birth, or they make it hard for you to function normally,

you may be experiencing a PMAD.

But I Don't Feel Depressed

The “classic” symptoms of depression—lack of interest in life, fatigue, feeling intensely sad—are not the only symptoms of PMADs. That’s why experts use the term perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, because other symptoms are actually more common such as anxiety and intense irritability or rage. PMADS include depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and post-traumatic stress disorder. Often, women experience a combination of more than one of these. There is a full list of symptoms on the back of this sheet.

What Causes PMADs?

Experts are not sure of the exact causes, but they do know that the huge hormonal adjustments that occur during and after pregnancy leave some women more prone to developing them. Underlying genetic vulnerability or adverse life events can also increase your vulnerability to developing PMADs, along with the natural stresses of pregnancy and new parenthood and sleep deprivation. They can happen to any mom.

Will I Hurt My Baby?

It is incredibly rare that a mother hurts her child intentionally, but when it does happen, the media usually reports that the mom has postpartum depression. In fact, in these instances, a woman is likely suffering from a psychiatric emergency called postpartum psychosis (see a list of symptoms on the back of this page). Like postpartum depression, this is a treatable mental disorder that can occur after childbirth, but they are not the same condition. *A woman experiencing postpartum psychosis loses touch with reality and may experience delusions (believing things that are not true), hallucinations*

(seeing, hearing or feeling things that aren't there), paranoia, erratic behavior, extreme confusion, euphoria or mania. She may not be able to put words together correctly or make sense of printed text. She may feel that a force is taking over her or believe that something is seriously wrong with the baby when it is not. Sometimes a woman with postpartum psychosis may feel a compulsion to harm herself or her baby and believe that doing so is the loving or right thing to do. If you or someone you love is experiencing any of these symptoms, it is imperative that she go to an emergency room right away.

Isn't Anxiety Just Part of New Motherhood?

Absolutely. Almost all parents report having thoughts and worries about harm coming to their babies. Our job is to protect them and that requires us to think through any possible threats (including ourselves). So, you are going to worry about things and wonder if you are doing things right or even think about bad things happening to your baby. But, the difference between an acceptable level of anxiety and an anxiety disorder has to do with how intense your anxiety is and whether it makes it difficult for you to function normally.

What Are the Symptoms of PMADs?

- Feeling weepy or overwhelmed for two weeks or more after delivery
- Being unable to sleep even though you are exhausted
- Wanting to sleep all the time
- Crying continuously
- Experiencing constant, intrusive fears or worries
- Performing repetitive behaviors or rituals (such as handwashing or checking on your baby) to try to control the worries in your head

- Not wanting to be with (or avoiding being with) your baby because you are afraid of harming her
- Being unable to leave your baby with anyone else or have him out of your sight for fear of him being hurt
- Feeling like your mind is racing with thoughts and you want a break from them
- Experiencing a constant sense of dread like something bad is about to happen
- Having a dramatic change in your appetite or weight
- Worrying that you are going crazy
- Persistently feeling that you have made a mistake by having a child
- Being unable to take care of your day-to-day needs or function relatively normally
- Feeling that your symptoms are unbearable
- Feeling intense rage or constant irritability
- Feeling numb
- Having panic attacks
- Feeling that you have “gone away” or lost yourself
- Feeling hopeless or that things will never get better
- Re-experiencing a trauma from your past
- Reexperiencing the sights, sounds, or sensations of your delivery in a negative way
- Thinking about harming yourself
- Believing your family would be better off without you or that you never should have become a mother
- Deep down, knowing that something is not right

If you are feeling one or more of the symptoms above, it is not your fault. You are not alone. And with help you will be well. It's time to reach out for it.

What Increases Your Risk for PMADs?

- A personal history of depression or anxiety
- A family history of depression or anxiety
- Having experienced a medically complicated pregnancy
- Having a baby who needed to spend time in the NICU or is having medical complications after birth
- Having a “fussy” baby
- Being a first-time mom
- Not having enough social support
- Experiencing other stresses, such as poverty or financial problems or a job loss in the family
- Having survived sexual assault or other abuse or trauma
- Having had a “high-risk” or medically complicated pregnancy

What If I Am Scared That Someone Will Take My Baby Away?

When you call Postpartum Support International, our trained volunteers will connect you with experienced professionals who understand perinatal mood and anxiety disorders and understand that you are not a threat to your child.

All of These Are Treatable. You Can Feel So Much Better.

Getting help is vitally important for you and your family. Treatment can take a number of forms, including individual psychotherapy, group therapy, or medication or a combination. And there are medications that can be used during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

By Kate Pope

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