

Life with a new  
baby is not always  
what you expect



***best start***  
***meilleur départ***

Ontario's maternal, newborn and early  
child development resource centre

Centre de ressources sur la maternité,  
les nouveau-nés et le développement  
des jeunes enfants de l'Ontario

Postpartum Blues  
or “Baby Blues”  
are COMMON.

4 in 5 mothers  
will have  
postpartum blues.





## POSTPARTUM BLUES OR “BABY BLUES”

Pregnancy, the birth of a baby, or an adoption brings physical, emotional and social changes. Adjustments to the new roles and relationships are not always easy. Almost 4 out of 5 mothers will experience the **Postpartum Blues** or “**Baby Blues**”.

### YOU MAY:

- Feel sad and tearful**
- Feel irritable**
- Feel exhausted**
- Feel overwhelmed**
- Have changes in your sleeping or eating pattern**

This is normal. It happens in the first few days or weeks after the baby is born. It will pass in a few days or at the most two weeks. It will pass easier if you: **Take care of yourself using strategies outlined in this brochure and let family and friends help you as well.**

Postpartum mood disorders are **REAL**.

1 in 5 mothers will have a postpartum mood disorder.



## POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AND POSTPARTUM MOOD DISORDERS

Sometimes the “blues” don’t go away. Or you may also feel this way during your pregnancy or later during the baby’s first year.

### YOU MAY:

- Not feel yourself**
- Be sad and tearful**
- Feel exhausted, but unable to sleep**
- Have changes in eating or sleeping pattern**
- Feel overwhelmed and can’t concentrate**
- Have no interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy**
- Feel hopeless or frustrated**
- Feel restless, irritable or angry**
- Feel extremely high and full of energy**
- Feel anxious – you may feel this as aches, chest pain, shortness of breath, numbness, tingling or “lump” in the throat**
- Feel guilty and ashamed, thinking you are not a good mother**
- Not be bonding with the baby, or be afraid to be alone with the baby**
- Have repeated scary thoughts about the baby**
- Have thought about harming yourself or your baby**

Have you had any of these symptoms for more than two weeks? Don’t wait. There is help for you and your family.

- Your health care provider (family physician, midwife, nurse, OB/GYN, psychiatrist)
- INFO line to find your public health agency: 1 866 532 3161
- Telehealth Ontario: 1 866 797 0000 or TTY 1 866 797 0007
- Mental Health Services Information Ontario: 1 866 531 2600

## POSTPARTUM MOOD DISORDERS MAY LOOK LIKE THIS:

1. You tell everyone you are feeling great and they believe you. You are up early, you try to look perfect and get back into shape. The house is spotless and so is the baby. But you wonder how long you can keep this up. Inside you feel like a totally different person.

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2. You don't feel like yourself at all. You can't get your head off the couch or the bed. You can't seem to take care of yourself and you don't even care if you do. You can barely take care of the baby.

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3. You thought you would fall in love with your baby, but instead the baby scares you. How can you look after and love this helpless baby. You don't want to take care of her or you pass her to dad or family members. You sometimes think the baby would be better off without you.

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4. You can't enjoy the baby, because you are always worrying about him. Is his diaper clean? Is he getting sick? What if you dropped him, if he slipped from your hands in the bathtub? What if he stopped breathing? You are constantly checking him, you can't even sleep and you are not letting anyone else look after him. You are getting more and more exhausted but you can't stop worrying.

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5. You are feeling so irritable. You get angry at the least little thing. No one can do anything right, folding the laundry or changing the baby. Something did not get done the way you want it done. You know your family and friends are tiptoeing around you so not to upset you, but you just can't stop getting angry.

# Postpartum Psychosis is RARE.



## POSTPARTUM PSYCHOSIS

Very rarely mothers will have postpartum psychosis. This is a serious illness with risks to mother and baby.

### YOU MAY:

- Have thoughts of harming yourself or the baby
- Hear or see things that are not there
- Believe people or things are going to harm you or your baby
- Feel confused or out of touch with reality

If you have any of these feelings or thoughts,  
**don't wait. Get help right away.**

Call your  
doctor now **OR**

Go to your local  
hospital's emergency  
department **OR**

Call a crisis  
intervention  
line



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Do not blame yourself.** You are not alone in feeling the way you do. Do not feel ashamed or guilty for your thoughts and feelings. They do not make you a bad mother.
- **Ask for help.** Talk to your partner, family, friends and health care provider. Do not be ashamed of your feelings. Delaying help may delay recovery.
- **Take care of yourself.** Try to rest, eat healthy foods and get some fresh air and exercise.
- **Take time for yourself.** Accept offers for help with household chores and baby care so you can have a break.
- **Get counseling.** Attend one-to-one counseling sessions or join a support group with other parents; it is helpful to talk through your feelings in a safe and supportive environment.
- **Consider medication.** Your health care provider may recommend medication that is safe to use while breastfeeding and is not addictive.







There is help  
for you and  
your family.

## WHAT CAN A PARTNER, FAMILY AND FRIENDS DO?

- **Listen and support her feelings.** Encourage her to talk about her feelings. Don't tell her to "Snap out of it," or "You should be happy to have a beautiful, healthy baby." This will only make her feel worse.
- **Encourage her to seek professional help.** Assist her in finding a compassionate health care professional. Offer to go with her to appointments for added support.
- **Develop your relationship with the baby.** This can provide the mother with a much needed break.
- **Ask her how you can help.** Providing meals, doing household chores, looking after other children or listening to her will be helpful.
- **Educate yourself about postpartum mood disorders.** Be patient. It takes time to recover.
- **Take some time for yourself.** Ensure you have some time to do what you enjoy doing. You need a break too.
- **Find someone to talk to.** A postpartum mood disorder is hard on everyone. Family, friends, your health care provider or a 24-hour crisis line can provide you with needed assistance.
- **Don't take mom's PPMD personally (it is not her fault or yours).** Avoid misunderstanding and frustration by communicating with your partner.

## **Remember... this is not your fault. There is help for you and your family.**

Life with a new baby is stressful for fathers/partners and other family members as well, especially if the mother becomes depressed. They need to look after themselves and should ask for help as soon as they feel depressed or anxious, too.

### **VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEB SITES:**

- The Best Start Resource Centre's Postpartum Mood Disorder Campaign: [www.lifewithnewbaby.ca](http://www.lifewithnewbaby.ca)
- Our Sisters' Place: [www.oursistersplace.ca](http://www.oursistersplace.ca)
- Mental Health Services Information Ontario: [www.mhsio.on.ca/PPMD](http://www.mhsio.on.ca/PPMD)
- Pacific Postpartum Support Society: [www.postpartum.org](http://www.postpartum.org)
- Postpartum Support International: [www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net)
- Depression After Delivery: [www.depressionafterdelivery.com](http://www.depressionafterdelivery.com)

**Life with a new baby is not  
always what you expect.**

**You may be 1 in 5 mothers with  
a postpartum mood disorder.**

**Remember:** there is help  
and you will recover.



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**Ontario  
Prevention  
Clearinghouse**

**Centre ontarien  
d'information  
en prévention**

*Best Start is a key program of the Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse.*