

## **Pamper yourself!**

Every new mother needs to take care of herself during the busy, confusing, exhausting days and weeks after their baby is born. Remember that your body needs your cooperation to recover from nine months of major physical changes. Neglecting yourself benefits no one- neither you nor your baby, nor the rest of your family. Here are elements of a survival plan to help you through the first months of motherhood.

Nurture yourself physically. Continue the healthy eating habits you established during pregnancy. Rest whenever you can. Exercise any way you can from an organized class where someone can look after your baby if necessary or taking walks with your baby in a stroller.

Develop a support system. Get together with other new mothers to share your challenges, anxieties, and your successes. Your childbirth educator may be able to help you join a new moms' group.

Express and accept negative feelings, while also attending to positive feelings. It takes more energy to dismiss your negative feelings than to express them either by talking about them with others or by writing them down. At the same time, take some moments to reflect on the parts of parenthood you enjoy.

Take breaks. Allow yourself a few minutes every day to read the headlines, drink some tea, or stare at the ceiling. Force yourself if you must. Also, allow yourself some time alone with your partner.

Keep your expectations realistic. Accept that the baby will take some work and don't think less of yourself if your only accomplishment in the first few months is a thriving infant-that's a major success!

Nurture your sense of humor. Laughter is proverbially good medicine. (Proverbs: 17:22)

Postpone major life changes unless you have no choice. Don't attempt such major decisions as buying a house or taking a new job until you feel more in control of the rest of your life except if there is pressure to do so. This goes for fathers too.

## DEPRESSION DURING PREGNANCY & POSTPARTUM Hot line: 1.800.944.4773

Depression during and after pregnancy occur more often than most people realize. Depression during pregnancy is also called antepartum or prenatal depression, and depression after pregnancy is called postpartum depression.

Approximately 15% of women experience significant depression following childbirth. The percentages are even higher for women who are also dealing with poverty, and can be twice as high for teen parents. Ten percent of women experience depression in pregnancy. In fact, perinatal depression is the most common complication of childbearing.

### **Symptoms**

Symptoms can start anytime during pregnancy or the first year postpartum. They differ for everyone, and might include the following:

- Feelings of anger or irritability
- Lack of interest in the baby
- Appetite and sleep disturbance
- Crying and sadness
- Feelings of guilt, shame or hopelessness
- Loss of interest, joy or pleasure in things you used to enjoy
- Possible thoughts of harming the baby or yourself

### **Risk Factors**

It is important to know the risk factors for antepartum and postpartum depression. Research shows that all of the things listed below put you at a higher risk for developing these illnesses. If you have any of these factors, you should discuss them with your medical provider so that you can plan ahead for care should you need it.

- A personal or family history of depression, anxiety, or postpartum depression
- Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD or PMS)
- Inadequate support in caring for the baby
- Financial stress
- Marital stress
- Complications in pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding
- A major recent life event: loss, house move, job loss
- Mothers of multiples
- Mothers whose infants are in Neonatal Intensive Care (NICU)
- Mothers who've gone through infertility treatments
- Women with a thyroid imbalance
- Women with any form of diabetes (type 1, type 2 or gestational)

Postpartum and antepartum depression are temporary and treatable with professional help. If you feel you may be suffering from one of these illnesses, know that it is not your fault and you are not to blame. You can call **1.800.944.4773** to reach out now. We understand what you are going through and will connect you to people who can help.

<https://www.postpartum.net/learn-more/depression/>