

# Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders



## **SOMETIMES ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION ARE MORE THAN WORRY OR THE “BABY BLUES”**

Pregnancy and new motherhood can be joyful and exciting. Sometimes things don't go as planned and it causes stress. Sometimes things go beautifully, and moms still don't feel like themselves. Many moms have strong emotions and mood swings during pregnancy. That is normal because women have high levels of hormones while pregnant and after giving birth. But sometimes those feelings get to be too much and develop into a Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorder (PMAD).

### **WHAT ARE PMADs?**

PMADs are feelings of depression and/or anxiety during pregnancy and up to a year after birth. They can also occur when a pregnancy ends. Postpartum psychosis is another PMAD, but it's rare. PMADs can feel mild or severe. Or somewhere in between. They are quite common and affect many women. Some women may have mild symptoms and feel overwhelmed and some may have severe symptoms and feel like they can't continue. PMADs affect each person differently. PMADs can make it hard to love and care for your baby as well as love yourself.

### **WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE THESE SYMPTOMS?**

PMADs can affect anyone: women of any race, age, or background. PMADs can even affect fathers and adoptive parents. These problems can happen after healthy pregnancies and for parents who very much want (and adore) their babies. Symptoms are a sign that you need support. It doesn't mean you're a bad parent.

### **WHAT ARE THE COMMON SIGNS?**

Many mothers have emotional ups and downs. Some feel sad and cry a lot after giving birth. Many mild signs of PMADs are common after having a newborn. You might feel anxious, irritable, and overwhelmed. Reach out to your primary care provider or HealthySteps Specialist if your feelings are intense or last more than two weeks and include any of the following:

- Inability to care for yourself (dressing, bathing, etc.)
- Inability to handle everyday tasks

- Constant crying
- Anger
- Numbness or disconnection from the baby or loved ones
- Constant checks on the baby
- Constant thoughts about your worries
- Sleeplessness
- Thoughts about hurting the baby, other family members, or yourself
- Guilt or doubt about your ability to care for your baby
- Concern from friends or family members

In rare cases, PMADs are so bad they may put you or your baby in danger. If you ever feel you may hurt yourself or your baby, call 911, or go to the nearest emergency room.

### **WHY SUPPORT MATTERS SO MUCH**

Seeking support may allow you to manage overwhelming feelings and worries. It can help you get some energy back and begin to feel like yourself. Feeling better is important for both you and your baby. Getting help for yourself can help your baby's development as well.

### **WAYS TO TRY TO IMPROVE YOUR MOOD**

- Talk about your feelings with someone you trust. It helps to talk about them, even though it may not change anything right away.
- Get your body moving. Take a shower. Try to go outside each day even just for a short time. Even better, take a walk.
- Take a few minutes to focus on yourself. Did you eat today?
- Take time to relax. Can you nap? If not, can you lie down and rest?
- Ask for support. Let someone you trust help with the baby so you can get a break.

SCAN FOR MORE INFO



### **YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE IN THIS ALONE**

Depression and anxiety can be treated. There are a range of options and getting help does not mean you will need medication. Treatment may include more support from family and friends, a focus on health and wellness, support groups, counseling, and medication. Talk to your HealthySteps Specialist if you need support.