



Could you be struggling with postpartum depression or anxiety?

When you welcome a new baby into your home, it's natural sometimes to feel worried, overwhelmed, stressed and other strong emotions, especially in the first week or two. But if these feelings and thoughts are making it difficult for you to care for your child, then there may be more going on.

Globally, about 10% of pregnant women and 13% of women who have just given birth experience a mental health disorder, primarily depression.¹ Postpartum anxiety is also common. In up to 50% of cases, depression and anxiety occur together.²

Maternal mental health disorders are treatable. They are also common and can affect virtually any woman. They tend to be caused by hormone-level changes, lack of sleep and increased stress during pregnancy and after giving birth. In fact, medical experts around the world recommend that women be screened for them as part of routine care after childbirth. Screening usually involves answering a short set of questions about your moods and thoughts.

Signs to consider

Here is a list of common symptoms of postpartum depression and anxiety. Check any that sound familiar to your situation:

- Crying more often than usual
- Feeling angry, irritable, restless or tense
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Feeling numb and lacking interest in your baby
- Feeling as if you are losing your mind
- Severely doubting your ability to be a good parent
- Having thoughts about harming yourself or the baby
- Fear and worry taking over your thinking
- Increased heart rate, headaches, chest pains, nausea
- Being unable to sleep
- Checking on the baby continuously

If you are experiencing some of these signs, it's best to check with your GP. They can evaluate you and, if need be, refer you to a mental health professional.

Ask for help in any case

Regardless of whether you are struggling with a mental health problem, taking care of a baby is difficult. It's important to take care of yourself as well. Consider asking for help from people you trust to give yourself time to rest, relax and catch up.

Think about the things that will help you to feel better, and ask them. For example, maybe they could do a few chores for you, watch the baby so you can take a nap, or even sit with you so you can have some adult company? Even a little help can go a long way.

Sources:

¹ World Health Organization. Maternal mental health. Accessed 28 December 2023.

² Centre for Perinatal Excellence. Postnatal anxiety. Accessed 28 December 2023.

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WF12560493 142618-122023