

Postpartum Depression (PPD)

Definition

Postpartum Depression (PPD) is a clinical depression that begins during pregnancy or after childbirth. Symptoms may appear anytime within the first year after birth and can significantly affect a parent's emotional well-being, daily functioning and ability to take care of themselves or their baby.

Prevalence

Globally, PPD affects approximately 10–15% of women (about 1 in 7), after giving birth. Many more experience short-term emotional changes known as “baby blues,” which affects 70–80 % of new mothers and usually within two weeks. When depressive symptoms persist or worsen, they may indicate postpartum depression. Symptoms such as sleep disruption and changes in appetite may go unnoticed because they are often considered normal adjustments following childbirth.

Symptoms

Symptoms of postpartum depression include:

- Persistent depressed mood or anxiety
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities, including bonding with the baby
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Sleep disturbances and extreme fatigue
- Feelings of restlessness or slowed movements
- Feelings of guilt, shame or worthlessness
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide

If these symptoms last for more than two weeks or interfere with daily life, professional support may be helpful.

Risk Factors

The following factors may increase the risk of PPD:

- Personal or family history of depression or mental health conditions
- Previous history of postpartum depression
- Stressful or adverse life events
- Sleep deprivation
- Lack of social support
- Hormonal changes (include thyroid changes)
- Pregnancy or birth complications
- Infant health challenges

Treatments

Postpartum depression is treatable. Effective supports may include:

- Psychotherapy, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) or interpersonal therapy (IPT)
- Antidepressant medications when appropriate
- Peer support groups and supportive relationships

Revised: January 2026

- Lifestyle supports, including sleep, nutrition and stress management
Early assessment and treatment can improve recovery.

Sources

American Psychiatric Association: [What is Perinatal Depression?](#)

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: [Postpartum Depression](#)

Cleveland Clinic: [Postpartum Depression](#)

Revised: January 2026