

# Your Emotional Health

When you have a new baby, it's normal to experience emotional ups and downs. But it's important for you and your loved ones to be able to recognize when you might need some extra support.



## KEY TAKEAWAY

Asking for help when you need it is a sign of strength, not weakness. After all, taking care of yourself is good for both you and your baby.



## MEDICAL EMERGENCY

If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or your baby, get help right away. Talk with your health care provider or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) to speak confidentially with a registered nurse.



## DID YOU KNOW

About 23% of parents will experience depression or anxiety during pregnancy or after a birth.

## The Baby Blues

### What are the "baby blues"?

The typical mood changes that happen in the 2 weeks after giving birth, affecting up to 80% of new mothers.

Not surprisingly, most people experience mood swings in the days after giving birth. Your hormones are changing, you're recovering from labour, and you're tired – really tired – from caring for a newborn. The "baby blues" may have you feeling sad, restless, irritable or helpless. Minutes later, you may be happy and full of energy. Fortunately, the baby blues usually go away on their own within 2 weeks.



## TRY THIS

Take good care of yourself. Sleep while your child naps, remember to eat, and take a daily walk with your baby.



## PARTNERS

### What You Can Do

- Encourage your partner to talk about their feelings. Listen and take them seriously.
- Let them know they're loved and valued.
- Don't pressure them for sex.
- Take on household chores and child care.
- Offer to go with them to see the doctor.
- Take care of yourself, too. Remember that you can also be affected emotionally.



## Perinatal Depression

### What is perinatal depression?

A more serious, longer-lasting depression that can happen during pregnancy or after the birth.

Some people experience more serious, longer-lasting distress. You may feel like you can't cope or that you might harm yourself or your baby.

### Signs and symptoms of perinatal depression

Do you:

- cry uncontrollably?
- feel guilty, worthless or unfit to care for your child?
- think about harming yourself or the baby?
- have panic attacks or severe mood swings?
- feel unable to enjoy your child or your usual activities?
- have trouble sleeping or extreme fatigue?

People who have had depression or anxiety before are more likely to have perinatal depression. Those with added stress in their lives – health or money problems, unstable or unsupportive relationships or a sick baby, for example – are also at higher risk.



### DID YOU KNOW

Perinatal depression can affect women or men, and can occur during pregnancy or at any time in the year after giving birth, adopting, miscarrying or having a stillbirth.

## Perinatal Anxiety

### What is perinatal anxiety?

Recurring intense worry or disabling fear that can happen during pregnancy or after the birth.

Some parents worry more than usual that something bad will happen, or have uncontrollable thoughts about harming their baby, either accidentally or on purpose. Anxiety disorders may also cause you to feel physically unwell.

### Signs and symptoms of anxiety

Do you:

- feel dizzy, sweaty or shaky?
- have gas, constipation or diarrhea?
- feel short of breath, panicky or like your heart is racing?
- get easily startled?
- feel restless or moody?
- avoid family, friends and activities?
- have trouble sleeping?

Anxiety may cause you to check on your baby all the time or to avoid doing day-to-day things, like driving, with her.

If you've had anxiety or depression or gone through trauma in the past, or if there's someone in your family who has had mental health issues, you may be at greater risk. Lack of sleep and not enough support may worsen anxiety.

## Getting Help

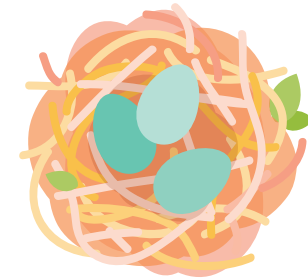
**Perinatal depression and anxiety are common and treatable.** You're not alone, and there are many ways to find support. Getting help early can mean feeling better sooner.

### Health care providers

Talk with your doctor or public health nurse. Or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 anytime, day or night, to speak confidentially with a registered nurse.

### Friends, family and community

Tell the people close to you how you're feeling, and listen to their concerns. Sometimes it's our friends and family who first see that we need help.



### The "NESTS" approach to self-care

- Eat **N**utritious food.
- Get some **E**xercise each day.
- Try to get enough **S**leep.
- Find a bit of **T**ime for yourself. Hire a babysitter or ask family to help with child care.
- Seek out **S**upport. Tell your partner, friends and family what you need. Talk with your health care provider or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1. Contact the Pacific Post Partum Support Society (postpartum.org) or join a postpartum support group.