



Gaye Lynn Schankweiler, MA, LPC
Licensed Professional Counselor

*Dedicated to helping children with emotional and behavioral problems,
by developing stronger more positive family relationships*

Baby Blues or Postpartum Depression?

I should be happy about having a new baby, so Why Am I Feeling So Blue? The answer may be that you are experiencing postpartum depression. Postpartum depression is a serious, treatable condition that may affect between 10 to 20 percent of women before and after the baby's arrival.

Baby blues generally happen right after childbirth and normally go away within a few days to a week. Postpartum depression can happen anytime within the first year after childbirth. Postpartum depression affects a woman's well-being and keeps her from functioning well for a longer period of time. The baby blues generally resolve by themselves, whereas postpartum depression signals a need for professional help.

Sometimes the woman doesn't tell anyone about the symptoms because they feel embarrassed, ashamed or guilty about feeling depressed when they are supposed to be happy. They may fear that they will be viewed as weak or unfit as a parent.

If any of the signs listed below last longer than two weeks during and after pregnancy, please check with your doctor about possible postpartum depression:

- Feeling restless or irritable
- Feeling sad, hopeless, or overwhelmed
- Crying a lot
- Little or no energy or motivation
- Eating too little or too much
- Sleeping too little or too much



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- Trouble focusing, remembering, or making decisions
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Loss of interest in usual pleasurable activities
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Having little or no interest in the baby
- Fear of hurting the baby or oneself

Remember it is important to take care of yourself, so that you have the energy to take care of your baby. Listed below are some helpful hints for self care:

- Try to get as much rest as possible
- Try sleeping when the baby naps
- Don't pressure yourself to do everything
- Don't be afraid to ask for help with household chores or nighttime feedings
- Talk with your spouse, family, and friends about how you are feeling
- Allow some quiet alone time
- Join a group with other mothers for support
- Remember to spend some alone time with your spouse/partner
- Try not to make demanding stressful decisions
- Ask for the help you need

If a mother is depressed, she may not have the energy to care for the baby or make the necessary decisions about the baby's care. Often the mother may not be able to emotionally bond with the baby. Research has shown that the mother's depression can have an affect in many areas of the child's development; such as language development, behavioral problems, sleep problems, and distress. If the child is not getting the necessary nurturing from the mother, then it is even more important that the father or another adult is available to provide the necessary nurturing.



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You deserve to be healthy and your child deserves a health mother. Do not suffer alone. If you find that you are experiencing symptoms of depression please tell someone. Together you can call and get started with the help you and your family deserve.

To find out more about depression during and after pregnancy by contacting the National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) at 1-800-994-9662. ■

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