NPWH The National Association of NURSE PRACTITIONERS in WOMEN'S HEALTH

You, your baby, and your mental health

Motherhood is an adventure. It's full of emotional ups and downs. There will be special moments that you love. There will be a lot of things you don't love. That's ok. It doesn't make you a bad mom. It means motherhood is hard!



What about mental health?

When you get pregnant and have a baby, you go through "matrescence" or "mother-becoming." This is a huge life change. Remember how you felt when you became a teenager? Your body changed. How you felt about life changed. Matrescence is as big a change. You will never be the same. As your baby changes, so do you. You'll keep changing until your baby grows up. Each pregnancy will be different. No wonder it doesn't always feel easy! But it can be a time for you to grow into yourself and flourish. Really! There are lots of support resources to help you.

01 Sometimes, you may wish you could go back to your old life, before you got pregnant.

02 You might not enjoy things you used to love to do.

03 You may feel stressed or overwhelmed

04 It might be hard to sleep.

05 You might have mood swings

06 You may get mad for no reason.

Most of the time, these symptoms don't last long. Many new moms feel sad for a few days or weeks. We call this the "baby blues." These feelings go away after a week or two.

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These tips can help you feel better.

- Eat regularly throughout the day. Stay hydrated.
- Get out of the house every day if you can. If that's not possible and the weather is nice, open a window and enjoy some fresh air.
- Get friends or family to help you with childcare, especially when you need sleep.
- Think about what causes the most stress. Is there anything you can do to reduce it?
- What's the one thing you'd like to have in your day to make you feel more like yourself? Try to make it happen.

When it's more than the "baby blues"

A lot of women have mental health problems during pregnancy or after having a baby. Your boyfriend, husband, or partner can also develop these problems. These can make things hard during your pregnancy. They may affect your baby's growth and development. It's important not to ignore these problems. One of the biggest gifts you can give Yourself, your baby, and your family is YOUR mental wellness.

Why do a lot of women have mental health problems during and after pregnancy?

There are lots of reasons. Think about what's going on in your life. Ask yourself these questions. If you answer "yes" to a lot of them, you may be at risk for mental health problems. What changes can you make?

Your Health

- Have you or your family had mental health issues?
- Have you been sick?
- Do you have sleep problems?
- Substance abuse?
- Did you lose your baby?
- Is breastfeeding hard?

Your World

- Not enough money?
- Need help managing everything?
- Feeling Isolated or not good enough?
- Do you think a lot about bad things happening?
- Is your baby hard to deal with?

Your Community

- Has a partner or other family member abused or hurt you?
- Have recent events caused stress?
- Does your family expect too much from you?

What should you do if you think you may have mental health issues?

Get help. Mental health problems are treatable. There is treatment that won't hurt your baby. Reach out to your health care provider right away

- **If you have thoughts that scare you**
- **If you feel like you might harm yourself or your baby**

Find a healthcare professional who works with pregnant women and new mothers. This field is called "perinatal mental health." They will work with you to figure out what are the next steps for you.

Resources:

Postpartum International Support HelpLine

Call 1-800-944-4773 (4PPD)
#1 En Español or #2 English
Text "Help" to 800-944-4773 (English)Text en Español 971-203-7773

National Maternal Mental Health Hotline

Free, confidential support, resources, and referrals from professional counselors 24/7. English, Spanish and interpreter services. Call 833-852-6262.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Free, confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24/7. Call of text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org.