

# New or Expecting Moms: Are You Having a Hard Time? You Deserve Support.



**Becoming a mother is a huge transition that comes with an incredible range of emotional responses.** Some are known as the “baby blues,” a two-week period of mood swings and a feeling of overwhelm after delivery that 80% of mothers experience. Others can happen in pregnancy, begin or last longer than two weeks after delivery, or are more intense than the baby blues. These symptoms and conditions are called perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs). They affect as many as 1 in 5 moms (twice as many as gestational diabetes) and are completely treatable.

## How Do I Know If It's More Than the Baby Blues?

The “blues” are caused by the drop in hormones after birth and are characterized by weepiness, intense highs and lows in your mood, as well as a general feeling of being overwhelmed, and having a low frustration tolerance or even anger. If you experience symptoms longer than two weeks, they begin during pregnancy or anytime in the year after birth, or they make it hard for you to function, you may be experiencing a PMAD.

## But I Don't Feel Depressed

The “classic” symptoms of depression—lack of interest in life, fatigue, feeling intensely sad—are not the only symptoms of PMADs. That's why experts use the term perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, because other symptoms are actually more common such as anxiety and intense irritability or rage. PMADs include depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Often, women experience a combination of more than one of these. There is a full list of symptoms on the back of this sheet.

## Isn't Anxiety Just Part of New Motherhood?

Absolutely. Almost all parents report having thoughts and worries about harm coming to their babies. Our job is to protect them and that requires us to think through any possible threats (including ourselves). So, you are going to worry about things or even think about bad things happening to your baby. But, the difference between an acceptable level of anxiety and an anxiety disorder has to do with how intense your anxiety is and whether it makes it difficult for you to function normally.

# What If I Am Scared Someone Will Take My Baby Away?

When you call Postpartum Support International, our trained volunteers will connect you with experienced professionals who understand perinatal mood and anxiety disorders and know that having one does not mean you are a danger to your child. In the very rare instances in which mothers harm themselves or their babies, they are usually suffering from a psychiatric emergency called postpartum psychosis, which is also treatable. If you or someone you know is experiencing delusions (believing things that are not true), hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there), or believes hurting themselves or their child is the right thing to do, it is imperative that you seek immediate medical help in an emergency room.

## Ways to Get Help

**Are you in crisis?** You can call the **GA crisis line** & talk with someone immediately: **1-800-715-4225**

**Want to leave a message 24 hours a day?** Call the **PSI HelpLine: 1-800-944-4773 (4PPD)** OR **text: 503-894-9453** and someone will respond within 24 hours, 7 days a week.

**Want to look for a local therapist who specializes in perinatal mental health?**

Check out our **Provider Directory: <https://psiga.org/get-help/find-a-provider/>**

## What Are the Symptoms of PMADs?

- Being unable to sleep or wanting to sleep all the time
- Crying continuously
- Experiencing constant, intrusive fears/worries
- Performing repetitive behaviors (such as handwashing or checking on your baby) to try to control the worries in your head
- Avoiding your baby because you are afraid of harming her
- Not being able to leave your baby for fear of him being hurt
- Constant racing thoughts
- A persistent sense of dread like something bad is about to happen
- A dramatic change in your appetite/weight
- Intense rage or constant irritability
- Feeling numb
- Having panic attacks
- Feeling hopeless or that things will never get better
- Reexperiencing a trauma from your past
- Reexperiencing elements of your delivery in a negative way
- Being unable to take care of your daily needs
- Thinking about harming yourself
- Believing your family would be better off without you
- Deep down, knowing that something is not right

**If you are feeling one or more of the symptoms above, it is not your fault. You are not alone. And with help you will be well. It's time to reach out for it.**