

## How Visiting Nurse Services of Iowa Can Help

Healthy feelings between a mother and her child are important for the baby's physical and emotional growth. Waiting too long to treat PPD may result in long-lasting effects. Healthcare providers and licensed counselors can help the woman find the treatment that is best for her. This treatment may include therapy and safe medications.

Visiting Nurse Services of Iowa offers the following services to identify and treat postpartum depression:

- Screening and assessment
- Therapy services
- Psychiatric care and consultation
- Listening Visits



Getting help for postpartum depression is the best thing you can do for yourself and your baby.



with you every step of the way

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## Motherhood and Moods

Recognizing and Treating  
Postpartum Depression and Anxiety



## Highs, Lows, Ups and Downs – the Many Moods of Motherhood

Every new baby is one of a kind and so is every new mother. Some women seem to experience motherhood joyfully, while others experience a roller coaster of emotions by feeling happy one minute and tearful the next.

### Baby Blues

It is not uncommon to feel overwhelmed with all of the changes associated with mothering and parenting. Every woman responds differently to these changes. Over time, most of these feelings subside as mothers become more comfortable with new routines and adjust to changes. This period may be referred to as the 'baby blues' and can last for several weeks following delivery.

### Postpartum Depression

Sometimes feelings of being overwhelmed can continue to linger and may lead into what is called postpartum depression (PPD). This is a more serious condition and may affect as many as 500,000 of the four million women giving birth each year. It is important to recognize the difference in mood and know when to seek help.



Feeling overwhelmed can be a normal reaction to motherhood.

## Who Experiences Postpartum Depression

Pregnancy and the process of mothering is a life change. There is a wide spectrum of issues related to pregnancy and motherhood that can contribute to postpartum depression. PPD can affect any woman who:

- Is pregnant
- Has recently had a baby
- Has ended a pregnancy or miscarried
- Has stopped breastfeeding

### Warning Signs

Postpartum depression and anxiety can appear days or months after childbirth. The warning signs are different for everyone, but can include:

- Trouble sleeping, sleeping too much, low energy or exhaustion
- Changes in appetite – eating more or less
- Feeling irritable, angry or nervous
- Not enjoying life as much as in the past
- Lack of interest in the baby, friends or family
- Lack of interest in sex
- Feeling guilty, hopeless or worthless
- Sudden crying spells
- Feeling like a bad or inadequate mother
- Having trouble concentrating
- Having thoughts of harming self or the baby
- Having difficulty controlling worry and anxiety
- Muscle tension

## Postpartum Depression is Temporary and Treatable

Family and friends may notice mood changes even before the woman does. They can help by being patient and supportive. Love and support, however, may not be enough. When symptoms last longer than two weeks or affect a woman's ability to enjoy her daily life, loved ones should encourage the mother to get help right away. Whether symptoms are mild or severe, they can improve with proper treatment.

### Risk Factors

- Unhealthy marital or dating relationships
- Limited social support
- Past or current anxiety or depression
- Presence of stressful life events
- Poverty

### What to Do

- Talk about your feelings with someone you trust
- Tell your doctor
- Ask family and friends to care for the baby
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise for more energy
- Join a support group
- Seek treatment if feelings last longer than two weeks

**Approximately 18.4% of pregnant women and 19.2% of new mothers have clinically significant symptoms of postpartum depression.**