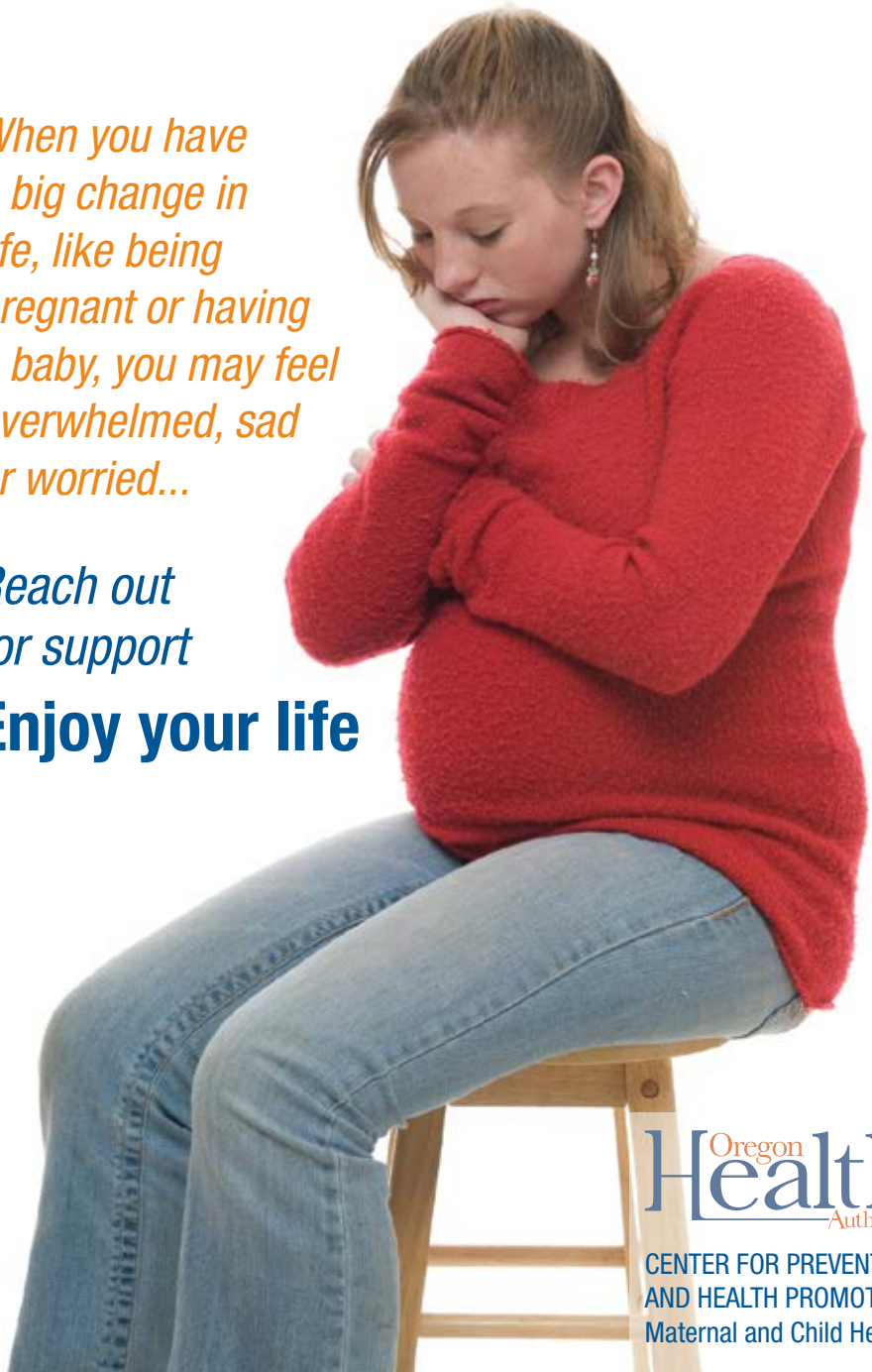


# A Guide to Understanding Perinatal Depression and Anxiety

*When you have a big change in life, like being pregnant or having a baby, you may feel overwhelmed, sad or worried...*

*Reach out for support*

**Enjoy your life**



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Maternal and Child Health



*“I haven’t felt like myself,  
how do I know if I need help?”*

If you have feelings of sadness, stress or worry during pregnancy or after having a baby, you may have perinatal depression or anxiety. “Perinatal” refers to the time you are pregnant through the baby’s first birthday.

### Are you feeling...?

- Sad or hopeless, or like you cannot cope
- Little interest or pleasure in doing things
- Overwhelmed or stressed
- Worthless or guilty
- Worried or restless
- Irritable or angry
- Like crying

### Do you have...?

- Trouble concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Little or no energy
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Thoughts that scare or disturb you
- Thoughts or plans of hurting yourself or your baby\*\*

### Are you...?

- Pulling away from friends and family
- Afraid to be alone with your baby
- Losing interest in bathing, fixing your hair or getting dressed
- Eating too much or too little
- Not feeling connected to or concerned about your baby
- Seeing or hearing things that others do not\*\*

Sometimes family and friends notice your symptoms of depression before you do. Love and support can help but may not be enough.

If the symptoms do not go away within 2 weeks, you should see a doctor or a counselor for treatment. **When you get the right treatment, you will feel better.**

\*\*If you have the symptoms in **bold red print**, you may have a serious condition called psychosis. This is an emergency. See a doctor right away.



*"I feel guilty and ashamed that I feel so bad. I think I should feel happy. Will these feelings of sadness go away?"*

## Baby Blues

This is normal and will go away in a few weeks after the birth of the baby. If the feelings do not go away after 2 weeks, or are severe, it may be perinatal depression or anxiety.

## Depression During and After Pregnancy

Perinatal depression can occur during pregnancy or any time in the first year after birth. It may not go away without treatment, which can include medication and/or counseling. With help you will feel better.

## Anxiety During and After Pregnancy

It is normal to worry about your baby. But if you cannot relax, or the worry gets in the way of your enjoyment or connection with the baby or others, there is a problem. Some women with perinatal anxiety get racing or scary thoughts that are difficult to stop.

## Postpartum Psychosis

If you are seeing or hearing things that others do not, you may have psychosis. Women with psychosis are often confused and not thinking clearly. This is an emergency. Women with psychosis need to go to their doctor or the emergency room immediately for evaluation and treatment.

## Depression in Fathers

Fathers can feel the same overwhelming stress as mothers. They may need support and treatment to feel better.

## Did you know?

50-80% of new mothers experience the baby blues.

One woman out of 5 experiences depression or anxiety during or after pregnancy.

One woman out of 1,000 may have a serious condition—postpartum psychosis.

One in 10 fathers experiences depression before or after the birth of their child.



# You are not to blame and it's not your fault.

## What can cause Perinatal Depression or Anxiety?

Anyone can get perinatal depression or anxiety.

They are illnesses that need to be treated. Some of the causes may be:

- » A personal or family history of depression, bipolar disorder or anxiety
- » Life stress, lack of support, isolation
- » Life trauma (abuse or violence, discrimination or racism, traumatic birth)
- » Hormone changes



**Being depressed or anxious while you are pregnant or a new mom may affect your baby and your family.**

*“I want to be a good mother, how does Perinatal Depression affect my child?”*

Sometimes depression or anxiety makes it hard to interact with the baby. As a result, babies may cry more and children may have learning and behavioral problems as they get older. It is important to get the help you need to have a healthy, happy family.

## What can you do to feel better?

Talk with someone who supports you and understands how you feel. Talk with your doctor. He/She may refer you to a counselor. Your doctor will help you decide if medication would make you feel better.

## What else helps?

- » Resting or getting enough sleep
- » Talking with friends, family and supportive people
- » Asking for help around the house
- » Getting physical activity every day
- » Eating healthy foods and avoiding junk food
- » Joining a group of new moms, going to community or church activities
- » Taking breaks, doing the things you enjoyed before the baby was born like dancing, listening to music or talking with friends



*“I thought having a baby would be easier. When I got help and support I started to feel better.”*

**With the right help, you will be well.**

**Reach out for Support. You can enjoy life.**

## **Phone Support:**

### **Postpartum Support International**

Caring support and links to resources in your community. Will call back within 24 hours.  
1-800-944-4PPD (4773) (Press 1 for Spanish) [www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net)

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

Free and confidential crisis counseling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.  
1-800-273- talk (8255) [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

## **Websites:**

### [www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net)

Support, encouragement, and information about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders; help to find community or internet resources.

### [www.healthoregon.org/perinatalmentalhealth](http://www.healthoregon.org/perinatalmentalhealth)

Information and links to services for women, families and providers in Oregon.

### [www.mededppd.org](http://www.mededppd.org)

English and Spanish information for women, family and providers.

## **Health and Social Service Information and Referral:**

Dial 211 for help finding health and social services in Oregon communities (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.). Search the 211info database any time at: [www.211info.org](http://www.211info.org)

## **In an emergency:**

Call 911 or go to a hospital emergency room.



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EL CENTRO DE PREVENCIÓN Y PROMOCIÓN DE LA SALUD  
Maternal and Child Health

Thank you to the Perinatal Depression to Wellness Network of Contra Costa County, Contra Costa Health Services, and California WIC for permission to reprint this brochure.

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