



# Mental Health and Pregnancy

Mental health problems during pregnancy or “postpartum,” which means after childbirth, can be serious medical conditions.

Some physical and emotional challenges for new moms are to be expected. What’s worrisome is when anxiety, depression or psychosis are left undiagnosed or untreated. These conditions can lead to heart and other health problems for both mom and baby.

## Conditions During and After Pregnancy

### Depression

Depression is a common, serious mood disorder that includes feelings of sadness and emptiness. Symptoms are more intense and longer lasting than just “having a bad few days.”

**Symptoms may include:**

- Crying a lot
- Unusual anger or irritability
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Losing interest in the baby
- Thinking about self-harm or hurting the baby

### Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal response to stress that includes feeling nervous, worried or scared. Sometimes anxiety occurs on its own. Other times it occurs with depression.

**Symptoms may include:**

- Constant worry
- Racing thoughts
- Trouble sleeping
- Rapid heartbeat

### Psychosis

Psychosis is a condition that can start in the first two weeks after childbirth and may involve delusions or hallucinations. Though rare, the condition is a serious medical emergency.

**Symptoms may include:**

- Seeing or hearing things that aren’t there
- Constant confusion
- Trying to self-harm or hurt the baby
- Thinking others will harm you

## Healthy Ways to Improve Mental Health

Mental health conditions during and after pregnancy are common and often treatable. Know that you shouldn't feel embarrassed or guilty about seeking help. If you're concerned about any symptoms you're experiencing during or after birth, talk to a health care professional right away.

### You should also:



**Get regular checkups** with a health care professional during and after pregnancy, and seek help right away if you have troubling symptoms.



**Create a support network** Partners, family members and friends can support mental well-being and watch for signs of mental health problems in new moms.



**Accept help** caring for the baby, doing daily errands or making meals.



**Join a virtual or in-person group for support and advice.** The American Heart Association's maternal health online forum can be found at [supportnetwork.heart.org](https://supportnetwork.heart.org).



**Maintain overall wellness** by getting enough sleep, eating nutritious foods and starting gentle exercise as soon as a health care professional approves.

