

Postpartum Wellness and Postpartum Depression/Anxiety (PPD/A)

After childbirth parents experience a range of emotions: from joy to feeling weepy, sad, overcome, and overwhelmed. No matter how well parents have prepared for their new roles, they may worry that there is something wrong with them for having these mixed feelings.

What makes parents feel this way? There are several possible reasons. The time after the birth of a child is a time of enormous change in a parent's life – socially, psychologically and physically. These changes place many demands on the parent. In particular, parents of multiples in particular may be tired and strained; taking care of multiple babies is a very hard job. Some possible signs of PPD/A include but are not limited to crying for no reason, chronic fatigue, loss of appetite, anxiety attacks, or ignoring or hyper-focusing on babies' care. If you feel you are experiencing PPD/A, talk to your family and friends and **consult a doctor immediately**.

Below are tips from new parents, nurses, obstetricians, midwives and mental health professionals to promote postpartum wellness. Keeping your body and mind strong and healthy can help reduce the effects of PPD/A, and help you feel better faster.

Make healthy lifestyle choices

Our mental health is greatly influenced by our physical wellbeing. Include physical activity, such as a walk with your babies, a workout video, or baby and me exercise classes in your daily routine. Try to get adequate rest by asking for help with child care (including overnight help for feedings), or consider hiring outside help if possible. Eat healthy foods and avoid drugs and alcohol.

Set realistic expectations

Don't pressure yourself to do everything. Scale back your expectations for the perfect household. Make sure expectations and day-to-day goals are realistic. Do not compare yourself to others. Do what you can and leave the rest. Keep in mind

that this part of your maternity/parental leave is not the time to accomplish large projects around the home.

Ask for help

Accept offers of help from family, friends and neighbours, but don't be afraid to ask people to leave. Many new parents are worn out from feeling like they cannot turn people away when they want to visit. Turn off your phone if you can for some quiet time. Try to open up to the people close to you and let them know you need help. If someone offers to baby-sit so you can take a break, take them up on it. Break suggestions: taking a nap, enjoying some time with your partner, go for a walk, catch a movie or meet friends for coffee.

Avoid Isolation

Avoid isolation. Talk with your partner, family and friends about how you're feeling. Ask other parents about their experiences. Join your local multiple births support group and attend events for new parents like playdates. Breaking the isolation may help you feel human again. It can be incredibly helpful to have a supportive friend who understands what you're going through while you're in the postpartum trenches. Visit baby drop-ins for monitoring babies' progress and help reduce anxiety, for breast feeding support etc.

Go to a peer support groups. Postpartum depression and new parenthood can both isolate you from others, and isolation can add to feelings of depression. Support groups are a safe place to share your experiences, learn from others, and connect with other parents who have similar experiences and understand what you're going through.

Self Care

Self-Care, or taking care of your well-being, is especially important, but this can be difficult for any new parent. It may be helpful to recruit loved ones, or see what services may be available, to help you find the time and energy so you can meet some of your own needs. Regular exercise can boost your mood and help you manage stress. Eating well and sleeping as much as you can, are also very helpful. It's always important to spend time on activities you enjoy, like relaxing in a warm tub, reading a book, taking a walk, going shopping alone, or continuing with a hobby you love. Try to find relaxation strategies that work for you, and spend time with people who make you feel good. If you feel like the world is coming down around you, take some time for yourself. Get dressed, leave the house, and visit a friend or run an errand. Also, it's important to spend some time alone with your partner.

Remember, the best way to take care of your babies' is to take care of yourself.

Seek Professional Help

If you are experiencing signs and symptoms of PPD/A, you should also seek professional help. You can contact your doctor, access local and national counselling services, or call the distress lines. It may be the first treatment to try for mild or moderate symptoms. It also teaches important skills like problem-solving, realistic thinking, stress management, and relaxation.

Questions?

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