

Talk About Depression and Anxiety During Pregnancy and After Birth

Ways You Can Help

Pregnancy and a new baby can bring a mix of emotions—excitement and joy, but also sadness and feeling overwhelmed. When these feelings get in the way of your loved one taking care of herself or the baby—that could be a sign that she’s dealing with deeper feelings of depression or anxiety, feelings that many pregnant women and new moms experience.



LISTEN

Open the line of communication.

- ◆ “I know everyone is focused on the baby, but I want to hear about you.”
- ◆ “I notice you are having trouble sleeping, even when the baby sleeps. What’s on your mind?”
- ◆ “I know a new baby is stressful, but I’m worried about you. You don’t seem like yourself. Tell me how you are feeling.”
- ◆ “I really want to know how you’re feeling, and I will listen to you.”



OFFER SUPPORT

Let her know that she’s not alone and you are here to help.

- ◆ “Can I watch the baby while you get some rest or go see your friends?”
- ◆ “How can I help? I can take on more around the house like making meals, cleaning, or going grocery shopping.”
- ◆ “I am here for you no matter what. Let’s schedule some alone time together, just you and me.”



OFFER TO HELP

Ask her to let you help her reach out for assistance.

- ◆ “Let’s go online and see what kind of information we can find out about this.” Visit [nichd.nih.gov/MaternalMentalHealth](https://www.nichd.nih.gov/MaternalMentalHealth) to learn more.
- ◆ “Would you like me to make an appointment so you can talk with someone?” Call her health care provider or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s National Helpline at **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** for 24-hour free and confidential mental health information, treatment, and recovery services referral in English and Spanish.
- ◆ “I’m very concerned about you.” Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** for free and confidential emotional support—they talk about more than suicide.

During Pregnancy and After Birth: Learn the Signs of Depression and Anxiety

You may be the first to see signs of depression and anxiety in your loved one while she is pregnant and after she has had the baby. Learn to recognize the signs and, if you do see them, urge her to talk with her health care provider.

DOES SHE:

Seem to get extremely anxious, sad, or angry without warning?

Seem foggy and have trouble completing tasks?

Show little interest in things she used to enjoy?

Seem "robotic," like she is just going through the motions?

DO YOU:

Notice she has trouble sleeping?

Notice she checks things and performs tasks repeatedly?

Get concerned she cannot care for herself or the baby?

Think she might hurt herself or the baby?

Depression and Anxiety Happen. **Getting Help Matters.**

In Massachusetts, visit www.mcpapformoms.org and select the "For Mothers and Families" tab for local resources and information.

To learn more, visit nichd.nih.gov/MaternalMentalHealth.

To find a mental health provider in your area, call **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**.



Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute
of Child Health and Human Development



Massachusetts Child Psychiatry Access Program
MCPAP
For Moms