

## POST-PARTUM CARE: EMOTIONS

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After you've given birth, a lot of attention is paid to the physical changes your body has gone through. But along with the physical recovery from childbirth, the change in your hormonal levels can lead to a wide range of emotions – both ups and downs.

The downs are sometimes called the Baby Blues, and are due in part to changes in hormonal levels, coping with a physical recovery, poor eating habits, fatigue, lack of sleep, inexperience or lack of confidence with newborn babies, loneliness or isolation from other adults, and the constant full-time demands of an infant.

For most new moms, the Baby Blues decrease with time and sleep, and disappear within a few weeks. But if these feelings continue, you may have true post-partum depression. Symptoms of post-partum depression include: excessive worrying or crying, extreme changes in appetite, the inability to sleep, and the inability to care for your baby or yourself.

If you experience any of these symptoms while you're in the hospital, or when you get home, don't wait for them to go away. Talk to your partner and seek professional help. In some cases, medication may be prescribed. Many times you'll feel better, and learn more about the emotional and physical responses you are having to motherhood by joining a post-partum support group.

Caring for a newborn can be very demanding, but there are some things you can do each day to help relieve some of the negative feelings you may be experiencing. Remember, this is an important time to bond as a family and family time can help relieve depression.

Try walking together. It's something the entire family can do together and can help you feel stronger, both physically and emotionally. Just getting outside can make a big difference in how you are feeling.

It's also important for others to support Mom. Let her know what a great job she is doing and try to help out whenever possible.

As a new mother, accept all the assistance that comes your way and learn to ask for help. If you're a single mom, make sure you have a friend or relative stay with you and help for a while.

Dads, relatives, and friends can make Mom's life easier by preparing meals, doing laundry, helping with chores around the house, making trips to the store, and helping look after other children in the home.

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Having a baby may make it seem that you and the baby's father never have time to be alone together anymore. Friends and relatives can help you find time away from your baby, to renew your relationship as a couple again. As soon as you feel up to going out, try to make plans to see a movie or spend some time together.

Becoming a mother is an emotional time. Do what you can to reduce the emotional demands on you by eating right, resting when you can and getting support by bonding with your family. But remember – if you feel your emotions are affecting your ability to care for your baby, talk to your healthcare provider right away.