

Baby's arrived -
so why am
I not happy?



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People expect that having a baby brings about **immediate** joy and happiness but as a new mum you may be very far from feeling this straight away.

It can be difficult to adjust to the big changes and the demands made by a new baby.

Soon after giving birth, you may feel weepy and irritable. If these feelings are in the early days you may be suffering from the **baby blues**.

The baby blues are so common that they are considered normal.

We don't know exactly how many mothers experience them, but it's likely to be somewhere between 5 to 8 mums out of every 10.

You may feel that being a mum will always be like this. Don't worry, things will get better, and quite quickly, too. The baby blues is not an illness, and usually last for just a few days.

If the blues continue and seem to be getting worse you could be suffering from Postnatal Depression.



- Let the tears flow
- Get some rest
- Accept TLC from those around you
- **AND** remember that your body has been through an enormous change

How do you feel?

Are you or your partner suffering from any of these following the birth of the baby?

It could be any combination of these

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Tearful and feeling low | <input type="checkbox"/> | No interest in sex | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cut off from things, isolated or unable to enjoy anything | <input type="checkbox"/> | Poor concentration | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unusually irritable | <input type="checkbox"/> | Loss of appetite or over eating | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unable to cope | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lack of confidence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Guilt about not coping or not loving the baby enough | <input type="checkbox"/> | Thoughts about harming yourself or the baby | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Difficulty sleeping | <input type="checkbox"/> | Difficulty making decisions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Difficulty bonding with the baby | <input type="checkbox"/> | Inability to relax | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you or your partner are experiencing some of these symptoms regularly and for more than two weeks it could be that you have Postnatal Depression (PND). Levels of this can be **mild**, **moderate** or **severe**.

SEEK HELP NOW!

**The sooner you talk to someone and seek help the quicker you will recover.
Don't suffer in silence!**

You may want to share this checklist with someone close to you or you could take this list to share with your GP, Health Visitor or Midwife.

Around 1 in 1000 new mothers can develop a potentially life-threatening illness called puerperal psychosis. Although rare, symptoms are extreme, bizarre and in some cases, dangerous behaviours. Seek emergency assistance **immediately** if you experience a mother behaving in such ways.

Who should you contact?
A health professional who you feel comfortable with.

GP
Midwife
Health Visitor

- If you can, take your partner or a friend with you for moral support.
- Remember these health professionals are there to listen and have the knowledge and skills to help you get better.
- As well as speaking to a health professional, you may find it helpful to talk to an understanding and sympathetic member of your family or friend about how you are feeling.
- You may find it helpful to be open and honest with other new mums. They may be feeling similar and you can have mutual support.

Helping yourself

This is **not** your fault but you need to take some responsibility towards getting yourself well again.

Here are some things that you can and should do immediately
DO

- Believe that you will get better and recognise that you are unwell and not a failure
- Take every opportunity to get plenty of rest/sleep
- Accept any offers of help graciously
- Get enough nourishment
- Have a daily treat
- Get some exercise e.g. a walk round the park with the pram
- Find time to talk and have some fun with your partner

Remember you don't have to

- Try and be superhuman... if something doesn't get done there is always tomorrow
- Blame yourself or your partner
- Make any major decisions e.g. moving house or job



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It is important to remember that:

Postnatal Depression is a **real** illness and like any illness it is treatable!

PND is the most common post-natal complication.

You may feel terrible now but you will get through it and recover.

Be patient with yourself! It may take time but you can and will get there!

None of this is your fault so there is nothing to feel ashamed or guilty about!



Dads and Postnatal Depression

New dads can also suffer from depression following the birth of a baby.

This is more likely to happen if your partner is experiencing depression, if you have had previous depression, or you are a first time dad.

How do you feel?

- Look at the checklist overleaf and if you are suffering from 2 or more of the symptoms then you should seek help immediately
- You are more likely to recover quickly if you acknowledge the problem. Consider asking for support or practical help from family, friends or consulting your GP.
- Remember as a new dad it is important that you look after your own physical and emotional wellbeing, so that you can look after your family as well as yourself.

For more information: www.fatherhoodinstitute.org & www.dad.info

Information for dads on looking after your partner

If your partner is not already doing so you must encourage her to seek immediate professional help. The sooner she does this the quicker she will recover.

Postnatal Depression is a **serious** illness but you can get better.

How can you help?

- Listen to her and be there
- Understand this is not her fault or yours, but a real illness and remind her that she will get better
- Be involved with your partner's care to gain understanding
- Be patient and kind
- Help her to organise her time and encourage her to work out what needs doing now and what can wait



Other practical things you can help with that will make a huge difference

- Cook a meal
- Keep visitors to a minimum
- Encourage your partner to take rest and time out for themselves
- Help with night feeds
- Offer to take the baby out for a walk or round to friends
- Remember to tell your partner of your love and give hugs
- Try not to make too many sexual demands - allow time for recovery

Want more help and information?

There are lots of organisations which offer further support and information forums, dads, partners, family and friends who are affected by Postnatal Depression.

Useful websites

The Association of Postnatal Illness
www.apni.org

NHS Direct
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Meet-a-Mum Association
www.mama.co.uk

The Samaritans
www.samaritans.org
Tel: 08457 909090

The Angela Harrison Charitable Trust
www.help4mums.org

Netmums
www.netmums.org

Parentline Plus
www.parenlineplus.org.uk

Elaine Hanzak
www.hanzak.com

Ann Girling
www.onthethreshold.co.uk

The Joanne (Joe) Bingley Memorial Foundation
www.joebingleymemorialfoundation.org.uk

Further Reading

Eyes without Sparkle
A Journey Through Postnatal Illness
Elaine Hanzak

Feelings after Birth
The NCT Book of Postnatal Depression
Heather Welford

When Baby Brings the Blues
Ariel Dalfern

This Isn't What I Expected
Overcoming Postpartum Depression
Karen R Kleiman & Valerie D Raskin

Saving Grace
Grace Sharock

Supporting Postnatal Women into Motherhood
Lyn Bertram