

Maternal Mental Health: You Are Not Alone

Pregnancy and bringing a new baby into the world can be exciting, but it can also feel overwhelming. Many mothers experience changes in their mental health during pregnancy or after giving birth. Asking for help does not mean that someone is a bad mother or has failed. Maternal mental health conditions are common and treatable, and support is available. About 1 in 5 women experience a form of Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorder (PMAD).



What is Maternal Mental Health?

Maternal mental health describes a mother's emotional and mental well-being during pregnancy and throughout the first year after birth. Mothers may experience:

- Depression
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Obsessive or unwanted thoughts
- Bipolar disorder
- Trauma related to pregnancy or childbirth
- Postpartum psychosis, which is rare but requires immediate medical help



Baby Blues or Postpartum Depression?

Many mothers experience the “baby blues” shortly after giving birth. This can include crying, worrying, feeling irritable, or becoming overwhelmed more easily. These feelings usually improve within about two weeks.

Postpartum depression symptoms are often stronger, last longer than two weeks, and may make it difficult for a mother to care for self, care for baby, or complete everyday tasks. Depression can begin during pregnancy or anytime during the first year after birth.

Signs That a Mother May Need Support

Additional support may be needed if:

- Feeling sad, hopeless, or crying often
- Experiencing intense worry, fear, or panic
- Feeling unusually angry, irritable, or out of control
- No longer enjoying things normally enjoyed
- Having difficulty feeling connected with baby
- Feeling guilty, worthless, or like a “bad mother”
- Sleeping or eating much more or less than usual
- Having difficulty concentrating or completing daily tasks
- Experiencing frightening or unwanted thoughts
- Thinking about death, suicide, or harming oneself or baby

A mother does not need to experience every symptom before asking for help. If something does not feel right, it is okay to reach out.

What Can Help?

Maternal mental health conditions can be treated. Support may include counseling, medication, support groups, help with basic needs, or a combination of these options.

A mother can start by talking with her OB-GYN, primary care provider, mental health professional, case manager, or any other trusted person. Family members and friends can also help by listening without judgment, offering practical support, and helping with connection to care.



Help is Available

National Maternal Mental Health Hotline:

Call or text 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)
Free and confidential support is available 24 hours a day. Family members and partners can also call.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

Call or text 988 if someone is experiencing suicidal thoughts or a mental health crisis.

For immediate danger:

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. Hallucinations, extreme confusion, paranoia, or unusual beliefs after childbirth may be signs of postpartum psychosis. This is a medical emergency and requires immediate help.

**You do not have to navigate this alone.
Help is available, and reaching out is a
sign of strength.**