

Emotional Health in Pregnancy and After Birth

Parents may have many different feelings before and after their baby arrives ranging from joy and excitement to guilt and sadness. Sometimes these feelings become so difficult that a parent can feel overwhelmed and helpless.

Having a baby is a big life change, and these feelings can happen at any time during pregnancy or within the first year after the birth or adoption of a baby.

About one in five parents experience depression and anxiety. They may notice:

- Exhaustion
- A loss of interest in things that used to bring happiness
- Sadness, anger, loneliness
- A change in appetite
- A feeling of constant worry
- Guilt and self blame
- Difficulty remembering things or making decisions
- Thoughts of hurting themselves or baby

Take care of yourself

- Recognize you are going through a major life change
- Ask for help
 - Talk to your health care provider
 - Talk to friends and family
- Sleep as much as you can
- Eat healthy foods
- Plan one thing to look forward to every day
- Be active every day
- Go to a local parenting program

If feelings last for most of the day, every day, for two weeks or more, speak to your health care provider or public health nurse.

The causes of depression are unclear. Many hormonal and chemical changes happen during pregnancy and after having a baby. Some other factors include:

- History of depression or trauma
- Lack of support or isolation
- Life stress

In rare instances, women can have a serious illness called psychosis. Women feel very confused and may have plans of harming themselves or their baby. It requires immediate medical treatment at a hospital emergency.

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You are not alone. There is help, you will get better!