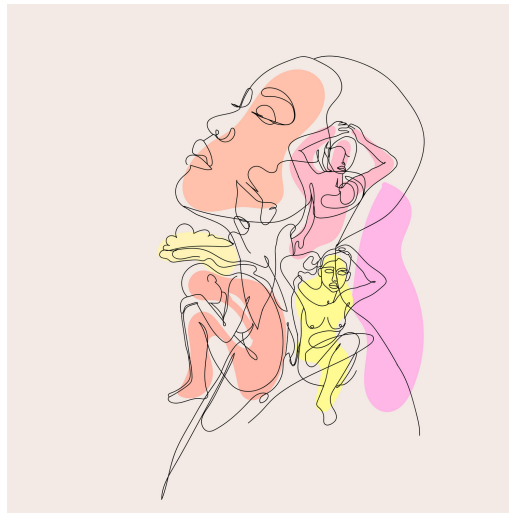




Postpartum Depression

June 2026



Sources

Here to Help provides mental health information and resources, including information on postpartum depression in British Columbia (Here to Help, n.d.).

Mayo Clinic provides medical information on postpartum depression symptoms, causes, risk factors, complications, and when to seek care (Mayo Clinic, 2022).

The Government of Canada provides postpartum health guidance through the Public Health Agency of Canada, including information on postpartum mental health, diagnosis, treatment, and when to seek emergency help (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023).

What is Postpartum Depression?

Postpartum depression is a form of depression that can begin before or during pregnancy, soon after birth, or in the weeks or months after childbirth. It may be mistaken for the “baby blues” at first, but the symptoms are more intense, last longer, and may interfere with daily life and the ability to care for yourself or your baby (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023).

Postpartum depression can begin within the first few weeks after giving birth, but symptoms may also begin during pregnancy or later, up to a year after birth. If left untreated, postpartum depression can last for many months or longer (Mayo Clinic, 2022).

It is normal for many new parents to feel emotional, overwhelmed, or tearful after childbirth. However, if these feelings last more than two weeks, get worse, make it hard to care for yourself or your baby, or include thoughts of harming yourself or your baby, it is important to contact a healthcare provider as soon as possible (Mayo Clinic, 2022).

Here to Help states that postpartum depression affects approximately 8% to 12% of mothers. It can affect first-time mothers, mothers who have already had children, adoptive mothers, and, in some cases, partners or fathers (Here to Help, n.d.).

Risk Factors

Postpartum depression can happen to anyone after childbirth, even without obvious risk factors. However, some factors can increase the risk, including:

- A personal history of depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or other mental health concerns
- A family history of depression or other mood disorders
- Postpartum depression after a previous pregnancy
- Stressful life events, such as illness, job loss, domestic violence, a traumatic birth experience, or a sick child
- Limited social, emotional, or practical support
- Relationship problems
- Financial stress
- Difficulty breastfeeding
- Medical complications for the parent or baby
- A baby with health problems or special needs
- Having twins, triplets, or other multiple births
- An unplanned or unwanted pregnancy
- Sleep deprivation and feeling overwhelmed after birth

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023; Mayo Clinic, 2022)

Symptoms of Postpartum Depression

Postpartum depression symptoms may include:

- Depressed mood or severe mood swings
- Crying more than usual
- Difficulty bonding with your baby
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Loss of appetite or eating much more than usual
- Inability to sleep, also called insomnia, or sleeping too much
- Overwhelming tiredness or loss of energy
- Less interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
- Intense irritability or anger
- Fear that you are not a good parent
- Hopelessness

- Feelings of worthlessness, shame, guilt, or inadequacy
- Reduced ability to think clearly, concentrate, or make decisions
- Restlessness
- Severe anxiety or panic attacks
- Scary or intrusive thoughts
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide

(Mayo Clinic, 2022; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023)

When to Get Help

You should contact a healthcare provider if symptoms do not fade after two weeks, are getting worse, make it hard to care for your baby, make it hard to complete everyday tasks, or include thoughts of harming yourself or your baby (Mayo Clinic, 2022).

Postpartum psychosis is rare but serious and needs immediate emergency medical care. It may include confusion, hallucinations, delusions, severe mood changes, paranoia, agitation, insomnia, or attempts to harm yourself or your baby. If postpartum psychosis is suspected, the person should not be left alone or alone with the baby and should go to the emergency department right away (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023).

If you are having thoughts of suicide or of hurting yourself, your baby, or someone else, call 911 if your life or someone else's life is in danger. In British Columbia, you can also call 310-6789, without an area code, to connect to a BC crisis line 24 hours a day (Here to Help, n.d.; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023).

How Are Mental Health Conditions Diagnosed?

A healthcare provider may ask about your symptoms and complete a physical exam. They may also order blood tests to check for other possible causes of symptoms, such as low iron, thyroid problems, or vitamin deficiencies. It is important to be open and honest with your healthcare provider about how you are feeling so they can help you find the right support and treatment options (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023).

How Are Mental Health Conditions Treated?

Treatment depends on the severity of symptoms and the person's needs. For mild symptoms, more support, more sleep, and time for self-care may help. Peer-led or nurse-led postpartum support groups, in person or online, may also be helpful for people experiencing mild symptoms (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023).

For moderate to severe symptoms, psychological therapy or counselling from a trained mental health professional may be recommended. Therapy may be one-on-one or in a group

setting. Here to Help notes that cognitive behavioural therapy and interpersonal therapy may help some people with postpartum depression (Here to Help, n.d.; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023).

When therapy alone is not helping or is not working quickly enough, medication may be recommended. Some people are concerned about taking medication while breastfeeding or planning another pregnancy, but for many medications, the benefits may outweigh potential risks. A healthcare provider can explain the risks and benefits of treatment options and help the person make the best decision for their situation (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023).

Self-Care and Support

Self-care does not replace professional care when symptoms are moderate, severe, or unsafe, but it can support recovery. Helpful strategies may include:

- Getting as much sleep and rest as possible
- Eating regular, balanced meals
- Asking trusted family or friends for practical help
- Talking openly with supportive people
- Joining a postpartum support group
- Taking short breaks from caregiving when safe support is available
- Being gentle with yourself and remembering that postpartum depression is not your fault
- Contacting a healthcare provider early instead of waiting for symptoms to become severe

(Here to Help, n.d.; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023)

Resources

BC Mental Health Line

If you are in distress in British Columbia, call 310-6789 without an area code to connect to a BC crisis line 24 hours a day (Here to Help, n.d.).

Pacific Post Partum Support Society

Pacific Post Partum Support Society provides support for women and families in British Columbia. Here to Help lists telephone support through Pacific Post Partum Support Society at 1-855-255-7999 or 604-255-7999 in the Lower Mainland (Here to Help, n.d.).

HealthLink BC

Call 811 in British Columbia for free, non-emergency health information. Through 811, you can speak to a registered nurse about symptoms or a pharmacist about medication questions (Here to Help, n.d.).

BC Women's Reproductive Mental Health Program

The Reproductive Mental Health Program at BC Women's Hospital provides specialized support for postpartum depression and anxiety. A doctor's referral is required (Here to Help, n.d.).

Postpartum Support International

Postpartum Support International provides education, advocacy, and global support related to perinatal mental health. It also hosts maternal mental health events and forums (Postpartum Support International, n.d.).

References

Here to Help. (n.d.). *Postpartum depression*. Retrieved June 18, 2026, from <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/postpartum-depression>

Mayo Clinic. (2022). *Postpartum depression: Symptoms and causes*. Retrieved June 18, 2026, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/postpartum-depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20376617>

Postpartum Support International. (n.d.). *World Maternal Mental Health Forum*. Retrieved June 18, 2026, from <https://www.postpartum.net/>

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2023). *Your guide to postpartum health and caring for your baby*. Government of Canada. Retrieved June 18, 2026, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/child-infant-health/postpartum-health-guide.html>