

Top Tips for Postnatal Depression

Make a Daily Plan

When you feel down you lose interest in activities and don't feel like doing much, but going along with this feeling will actually make you feel worse. Doing things (as hard as it feels and as much you don't feel like it) will help you to feel better.

Try to do something pleasant every day no matter how unrealistic this may sound. If necessary ask a friend to mind your kids so you can have some time out. Doing something that gives you a sense of achievement like finishing a load of washing also helps, as does keeping active through exercise.

Get As Much Sleep As You Can

As unrealistic as this may sound, tiredness can make depression worse so it's important to try and get a good night's sleep. When this isn't possible (which is often during the first 3 months) nap during the day. Try not to worry about what other things need to get done. Your house being perfect is not important; your health needs to come first.

Outsource, Outsource, Outsource

As fantastic as you are you are not superhuman. ALL women need help after having a baby. The women who tell you they don't are lying. Say yes when people offer to help and don't ever be embarrassed to ask – people like helping the people they care about so it's a win-win.

Stay in Touch With Friends, Family, and Other Mums

You'll probably find that depression makes you not want to see other people, but staying at home by yourself will make you feel worse. Stay in touch with family and friends and get out of the house where you can – even if it's just to walk around the block.

Mothers groups are a great way to feel supported and to stay in touch with other mums. If your mothers group is filled with mums who appear to have it all together – don't be fooled. If you haven't shared your struggles they probably haven't either.

Share Your Feelings

Reaching out to others can be difficult, but keeping your feelings bottled up can make things seem worse. Speak to other parents who you know won't be afraid to speak openly and honestly about their own parenting experiences. Most mums feel like they'll be judged if they don't look like they have it together all the time and go to huge lengths to hide their feelings. The result? Everyone feels like they're the only ones not coping. Speaking honestly with people you trust can help you see the truth – everyone finds motherhood challenging.

think TOP TIPS

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DEPRESSION

Having a baby is life changing. Being a parent is extremely rewarding but when your little bundle of joy won't sleep or feed its challenging to say the least. It's no wonder 10-20% of women develop postnatal depression.

It's normal to feel emotional after having a baby but ongoing low mood might be a symptom of postnatal depression. Other symptoms include:

- Feeling sad, low, helpless, or teary
- Guilt
- A loss of interest in activities
- Anxiety (e.g. about bub's health)
- Irritability
- Sleep problems
- Changes to appetite
- Concentration problems
- Indecisiveness
- Social withdrawal
- Self-criticism (esp about parent skills)

Most new mums with postnatal depression find it hard to speak up because they worry others will think they're a bad parent – they won't. Don't wait, the sooner you seek help the sooner you can start to feel better.

This tips sheet covers strategies for managing postnatal depression. If your depression persists, speak to your GP about a referral to a clinical psychologist with specialist experience.