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# Postpartum Depression



Women are particularly vulnerable to depression after giving birth when hormonal and physical changes, and the new responsibility of caring for a newborn can be overwhelming. Many new mothers experience a brief episode of mild mood changes known as the "baby blues," but some will suffer from postpartum depression (PPD), a much more serious condition that requires active treatment and emotional support.

## *Myths & Facts about PPD*

**Myth:** Pregnant and postpartum women don't get depressed.

**Fact:** Pregnancy does not protect a woman from depression; the childbearing years are when women are most likely to experience depression.

**Myth:** If you don't get PPD right after you give birth, you won't get it at all.

**Fact:** PPD can happen any time in the first year after a woman gives birth.

**Myth:** PPD will go away on its own without treatment.

**Fact:** The "baby blues" may last up to 4 weeks but usually goes away on its own. PPD almost never goes away without treatment. Fortunately, there are effective treatments available.

**Myth:** All women with PPD have thoughts about hurting their children.

**Fact:** Most women with PPD do not hurt their children. However, women with postpartum psychosis, a life-threatening disorder separate from PPD, are at risk of hurting their babies or themselves and need immediate help.

**Myth:** Women with PPD can't take antidepressants if they are breastfeeding.

**Fact:** Studies have shown that there is a very small risk to the baby with the antidepressants most likely to be prescribed for PPD.

**Myth:** Women with PPD look depressed or stop taking care of themselves.

**Fact:** You can't tell a woman has PPD by looking at her. A woman with PPD may look perfectly "normal" to everyone else.

## *Resources*

The National Institute of Mental Health, [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov) and [www.mededppd.org](http://www.mededppd.org)

Medline Plus: [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/postpartumdepression.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/postpartumdepression.html)

*Thank you Catholic Diocese of Toledo, Ohio, for sharing the original document with us*

Diocese of Des Moines Disability Ministry | 515-237-5073 | [www.dmdiocese.org/disabilityministry](http://www.dmdiocese.org/disabilityministry)

