

Postpartum: What It Really Looks Like

Remember: postpartum struggles don't always look like crying all day. Many moms are functioning on the outside and drowning on the inside. It can begin during pregnancy or any time in baby's first year, and it is **not** a sign you're a bad mom.

What it can actually look like

Check any that sound familiar.

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| ☐ Rage or snapping that doesn't feel like you | ☐ Can't sleep even when the baby is sleeping |
| ☐ Feeling numb, flat, or like you're on autopilot | ☐ Constant checking: breathing, bottles, locks |
| ☐ Scary, unwanted thoughts or images of something bad happening to baby | ☐ Saying "I'm fine" while feeling far from fine |
| ☐ Not feeling the bond you expected | ☐ Dread as evening or bedtime approaches |
| ☐ Racing heart, tight chest, can't sit still | ☐ Thinking your family would be better off with someone else caring for them |
| ☐ Crying in the shower or the car, where no one sees | ☐ Avoiding friends, texts, or leaving the house |

Baby blues

Very common. Weepy, moody, overwhelmed in the first days after birth.

Usually eases on its own within about 2 weeks.

When it's more

Lasts longer than 2 weeks, gets worse instead of better, or makes it hard to care for yourself or baby.

This is postpartum depression or anxiety, and it's very treatable.

About scary thoughts: unwanted thoughts of harm coming to your baby are surprisingly common. If they horrify you, that's your brain trying to protect your baby. Saying them out loud to a counselor won't get you in trouble. It gets you help.

Get help right away if you

- Have thoughts of harming yourself or your baby that feel like something you might act on
- See or hear things others don't, feel confused, or believe things that don't make sense
- Go days barely sleeping and feel unusually energized or "not yourself"

Call **911** or **988**. Maternal Mental Health Hotline: **1-833-852-6262** (call or text, 24/7).

Next step: tell your OB, midwife, or pediatrician what you checked above, ask them to rule out thyroid or anemia, and call a counselor from the directory. Many treatment options are safe while breastfeeding. Postpartum Support International: 1-800-944-4773.

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd... and shall gently lead those that are with young."

ISAIAH 40:11