

How Partners Can Help:

New moms suffering from a PMAD need the support of their partner, as well as friends and family. Help with baby care and household responsibilities, provide an ear to listen or a shoulder to cry on, and be patient and understanding with her struggles. And make sure she gets help.

Partners also need to take care of themselves. Having a new baby is hard for partners too, and many partners develop anxiety or depression themselves. Get help for yourself if you need it as well as helping your partner.



How to help a partner suffering from a PMAD:

- Encourage her to get professional help. You need help to support a mother with a PMAD.
- Encourage her to talk about how she is feeling. Listen without judging her. Instead of trying to fix the problems, just be there for her.
- Offer help around the house. Chip in with the housework and childcare responsibilities. Don't wait for her to ask!
- Make sure she takes time for herself. Rest and relaxation are important. Encourage her to take breaks, hire a babysitter, or schedule some date nights.
- Be patient if she's not ready for sex. Depression affects sex drive, so it may be a while before she's in the mood. Offer her physical affection, but don't push her. She will recover in time!
- Go for walks with her. Getting exercise and sunshine can make a big dent in symptoms, but it may be hard for her to motivate herself. Help her by making walks a daily ritual for the two of you.



MT. DIABLO PERINATAL
PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATES

This brochure is provided by Mt. Diablo Perinatal Psychotherapy Associates. We are a collective of therapists who specialize in treating mothers with PMADs. We offer the following services:

- Individual, couple and family therapy
- Infant/Parent Psychotherapy
- Postpartum support groups
- Consultation for health care providers

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When Being a Mom Isn't What You Expected



What if being a mom isn't what you expected? About 10-20% of new moms experience a perinatal mood or anxiety disorder (PMAD), which can begin any time during pregnancy or the first year after childbirth. PMADs are treatable illnesses that can cause feelings of sadness, guilt, indifference, anxiety, and/or intrusive thoughts. It might feel like having a baby is too hard, or you wonder if you're a bad mom -- but it is in fact an illness that will get better with help.

PMADs include Postpartum Depression, Anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, or Postpartum Psychosis. This brochure will provide information about these illnesses and how to get help.

Postpartum Depression (PPD)

PPD is different from the "baby blues." A majority of new mothers experience the "baby blues," a period of sadness that isn't debilitating and passes quickly. Symptoms of the "baby blues" include tearfulness, irritability, restlessness, and anxiety. But when symptoms of sadness, irritability or anxiety continue for more than two weeks

or make it difficult to care for your baby, there is more going on and it's time to reach out for help.

Symptoms of PPD include:

- Fatigue, lethargy, or irritability
- Feeling sad, hopeless, helpless, or worthless
- Difficulty sleeping and/or eating
- Difficulty concentrating/confusion
- Lack of interest in the baby or excessive anxiety about the baby
- Fear of harming the baby or oneself

Symptoms vary in severity, but persistent sadness and anxiety often causes new moms to feel isolated, guilty, or ashamed.

You should tell your doctor if you have several of these symptoms for more than

two weeks, if you have thoughts of suicide or of harming your child, sad or anxious feelings are getting worse, or you are having trouble caring for your baby or yourself.

PPD is an illness. It is not a sign of weakness or of being a bad mother. It can be treated successfully, and getting help right away is the best thing you can do for you and your baby.

Postpartum Anxiety and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder



Many new moms experience primarily anxiety rather than sadness. Anxiety, panic attacks, irrational fears or intrusive



Treatment for PMADs is Effective

If you believe you are suffering from a Perinatal Mood or Anxiety Disorder, the first step is to talk to your doctor or mental health provider.

You should be evaluated by your doctor to rule out a medical cause that can contribute to depression or anxiety.

Psychotherapy, medication or a combination of the two may be needed to get you back to feeling like yourself. You must continue treatment even after you begin to feel better, because discontinuing treatment too soon can cause symptoms to recur.

The support of family and friends is also instrumental to your recovery. Joining a support group for postpartum disorders can help overcome feelings of isolation, increase coping skills and provide social support.

Getting help is the most important step you can take for yourself and your baby. Untreated maternal depression is associated with developmental delays in babies, as well as potentially serious psychological consequences for you and your growing child.

thoughts or images can be associated with Postpartum Anxiety or OCD. Symptoms of a panic attack can include a racing heartbeat, unusual physical symptoms, a sense of impending doom, the feeling that you are dying, dizziness or nausea.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder after Childbirth (PTSD)

New mothers can also develop PTSD or experience a recurrence of PTSD following a difficult childbirth experience. PTSD involves reexperiencing the trauma through flashbacks or nightmares, having difficulty sleeping, and feeling detached or estranged from friends and loved ones.



Postpartum Psychosis

Postpartum psychosis is rare but also very serious. It affects about one out of every 500 new moms. The symptoms are severe and may include insomnia, agitation, hallucinations, and extreme paranoia or suspiciousness. Postpartum psychosis is a serious medical emergency and requires immediate attention.

Risk Factors for a PMAD

Any new mom can develop a PMAD. However, women are at increased risk if they have a personal or family history of depression, anxiety, or bipolar illness, if they have experienced particularly stressful life events, or if they don't have adequate support from family and friends.