

Postpartum Promise

Dear _____,

Postpartum blues, depression and psychosis are real illnesses that affect an estimated 20-30 percent of women following the birth of a child. If it happens to me, I probably won't just "snap out of it" - I may need help: from you, from my doctor or midwife, from a counselor or someone else.

I am giving you this contract because I may not recognize one or more of these symptoms I am experiencing, or may not want to recognize them. After the birth, please read over the risk factors and symptoms listed below. Do they sound like what I am going through? If so, please make sure I get the help I need, especially if I cannot help myself. Thank you for your love and support!

My signature

Your signature

Risk Factors

I am more at risk for PPD . . .

- If I have suffered from depression before.
- If I have a family history of depression.
- If I have had hormonal problems, like PMS.
- If I'm taking certain medications.
- If I had a difficult pregnancy or birth.
- If my pregnancy was unplanned.
- If my partner is often away from home.
- If I'm feeling unsupported by my partner.
- If I am going through a separation or divorce.
- If someone close to me is ill or recently died.
- If loved ones died during my childhood.
- If I've just moved to a new home.
- If I recently changed jobs, quit or was fired.
- If I'm feeling isolated by being home all day.
- If I have been under a lot of stress.

Postpartum depression is very real, and also very treatable. Many women suffer unnecessarily, because they are embarrassed or uncertain that they have PPD. Keep one of these contracts for yourself, and give one to your husband, your mother, your father, your sister, or your best friend. Help them to know how to help you

Baby Blues

Experienced by 25-50% of women
Severity level: Low

- I may not be able to sleep well.
- I may cry a lot, even about little things.
- I might experience mood swings.
- I may seem irritable.
- I may express that I feel inadequate.
- I may not feel like myself anymore.
- I may start showing signs of baby blues 3-5 days after our baby is born. I should not feel like this for more than a couple weeks, and if I do, it may be the sign of a bigger problem for which I need help.

Postpartum Depression

Experienced by 10-15% of women
Severity level: Medium to high - seek treatment promptly

- I may seem to be tired all the time.
- I may not be able to sleep well.
- I may cry a lot, even about little things.
- I may have a hard time concentrating.
- I may express feelings of guilt or inadequacy.
- I may be very irritable or hostile.
- I may seem very anxious and I can't cope.
- I may not show much interest in the baby.
- I may be hyper-concerned for the baby.
- I may worry about harming myself or baby.
- I may have headaches or chest pains.
- I may not care about how I look.
- I may not feel like myself anymore.
- I may not be interested in sex/intimacy.
- I may start showing signs of PPD anytime within six to twelve weeks after our baby is born, or anytime in the first year.

Postpartum Psychosis

Experienced by .1-.2% of women
Severity level: High - seek immediate treatment! Possibly life-threatening

- I may seem to be tired all the time.
- I may not want to eat.
- I may seem confused.
- I may have severe mood swings.
- I may feel hopeless or ashamed.
- I may talk about suicide, or hurting the baby.
- I may seem hyperactive or manic.
- I may talk very quickly or incoherently.
- I may act very suspicious of others.
- I may be having delusions and hallucinations.

When it comes to postpartum depression, most moms think, "Well, that won't be me." What many women don't realize is that it really might happen to them - between one quarter and one-half of all women experience some form of a postpartum depressive illness.