

# Do I Have Postpartum Depression



Depression is real. Many women have depression. Talking to someone is the first step toward feeling like yourself again. For more information about depression, call the National Women's Health Center (1-800-994-9662 [TDD: 1-888-220-5446]) or talk to your provider. These tips can help you get started.

## 1. Start by making the appointment to see your provider:

If you already have an appointment scheduled, you've already taken the first step!

**If you still need to make an appointment, here are some things to say during the first call:**

*"I haven't been myself lately, and I'd like to talk to the provider about it."*

*"I think I might have depression, and I'd like some help."*

## 2. Give the provider or nurse the completed checklist from the brochure.

Tell him or her about your concerns. Here are some ways you could start the conversation:

*"I completed this checklist, and I wonder if I have depression."*

*"I read this brochure, and it sounds like how I feel. Can you help me find out if I have depression?"*

*"I don't feel like myself. Could it be depression?"*

Explain how long you've been having trouble, discuss what symptoms you've had, and tell the provider that you're concerned you might have depression.

It might be hard to talk about depression, especially if you are feeling guilty or ashamed. But the provider can help.

A mental health specialist is a professional who has received training in treating depression. Specialists might include psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, or counselors.

Remember that depression is NOT YOUR FAULT. By asking for help, you are helping yourself, your baby, and your family.

## In response, your provider should:

- Carefully **review your completed checklist**
- Ask **several more questions** about how you are feeling and acting
- Talk with you about **treatment options** OR
- Possibly provide the **name and number of a mental health specialist** for you to see

## 3. Then, ask any questions you have.

### These may include:

- *Do you think I have depression?*
- *What are the treatments for depression?*
- *Have you treated women for depression before?*
- *Would a mental health specialist be better able to help me?*

### If the provider prescribes an antidepressant for you, here are more questions you may have:

- *Why did you pick that specific medication for me?*
- *How do I take this medicine?*
- *Are there side effects? What are they?*
- *How long before I can expect this treatment to help make me feel better?*
- *How long do you think I will be on this treatment?*
- *When should I come back to see you again?*

Be sure to let your provider know if you are breastfeeding. Most antidepressants do not affect breastfeeding infants, but only you and your provider can decide if taking medications while breastfeeding is right for you.



### **I spoke to my provider, but she didn't understand my concerns.**

If you gave your provider the checklist and told her you're concerned you might have depression, she should ask you several more questions and provide you with information about depression, just like with any other illness.

No provider should ignore you. Even if the provider doesn't treat depression in her clinic, she should help you find someone who can help before you leave the clinic that day. It is possible the provider does not understand how bad you are feeling.

### **Be sure you are clear about your symptoms and how they are affecting you:**

- *Be open about the problems you are having. The provider cannot help you unless you tell him honestly about your experiences and concerns.*
- *Use the checklist to identify which symptoms you have and how long you have had them.*
- *Let the provider know that you are struggling and need help.*

### **I'm not sure my provider understands.**

You can always ask to talk to someone else. Often there are other people in the office who have experience helping women with depression. These people might include nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, or physicians. Ask the physician or front desk staff:

*"Is there someone else I can talk to about this? Maybe a nurse or social worker?"*

*"I'd like to see a mental health specialist. Can you or one of your assistants help me make an appointment with a specialist?"*

### **I'm just not sure I can make that phone call.**

Ask the nurse practitioner or other professional to be with you when you make the first call.

*"I'm a little nervous about calling. Do you think you could help me call the specialist to set up my appointment?"*

*"I'm not sure I trust myself to actually make the call after I leave here today. Do you think you could help me with that?"*

### **I'm very nervous about seeing a mental health specialist. I'm not sure I want to go to the appointment.**

Being a little nervous is normal. A mental health specialist understands that depression is a medical condition that can be effectively treated.

The specialist will not judge you. But they cannot help unless you go to see them.

If you're still concerned you might not keep the appointment, tell a trusted friend or family member about the appointment. Ask if he or she can go along with you or make sure you keep the appointment. Your provider may ask you to sign a release form so he or she can talk with the specialist, which can help the specialist determine the best treatment for you.

## **Depression is treatable.**

## **You are not alone.**

## **Talk to someone today.**

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### **Contact Information**

[www.4woman.gov](http://www.4woman.gov)

1-800-994-9662 or 1-888-220-5446 for the hearing impaired.