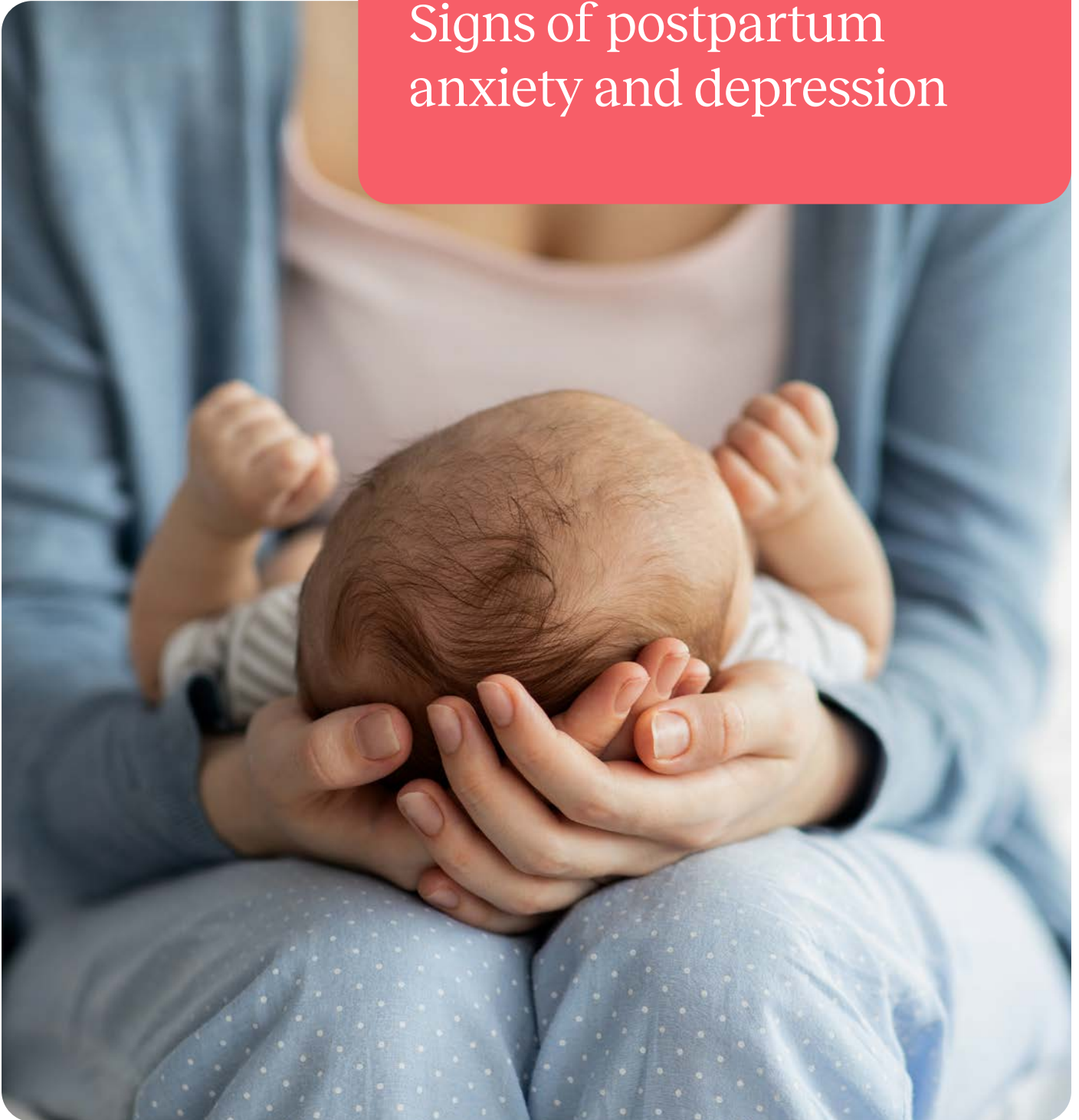


Maternal mental health: Signs of postpartum anxiety and depression



Bringing a baby into the world is often described as one of life's most joyful experiences, but for many new parents, it can bring unexpected emotional challenges. Imagine feeling **overwhelmed, tearful, or constantly on edge**, but not knowing if it's normal or something more serious. Postpartum anxiety and depression affect **one in five new mothers**, yet many suffer in silence.

Baby blues or something more serious?

30%

of parents
delay seeking
professional
support

Feeling emotional, tearful, or overwhelmed after birth is common. This is often called the 'baby blues' and usually fades within two weeks as hormone levels stabilise.

However, if these feelings persist beyond two weeks, worsen, or start interfering with daily life, it could indicate postpartum anxiety or depression. Studies suggest that **nearly 30% of parents experiencing these conditions delay seeking professional support** until symptoms become harder to manage.



Signs to watch for

Postpartum anxiety and depression can manifest in different ways. Common signs include:

- **Constant worry or panic attacks** – Feeling anxious all the time, sometimes with a racing heart or shortness of breath.
- **Prolonged sadness or emptiness** – Crying often or feeling numb inside.
- **Difficulty bonding with your baby** – Feeling disconnected or indifferent towards your child.
- **Exhaustion but difficulty sleeping** – Feeling drained yet unable to rest.
- **Loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed** – Struggling to find pleasure in hobbies or socialising.
- **Difficulty concentrating or making decisions** – Feeling mentally foggy or overwhelmed by simple choices.
- **Withdrawing from loved ones** – Avoiding social interactions and support.
- **Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby** – Feeling hopeless or having distressing thoughts.

If you recognise these signs in yourself or someone you know, speaking to a **healthcare professional can help**.

Why getting help early matters

Many parents hesitate to ask for help due to fear of judgment or feeling like they should 'cope' alone. But **postpartum anxiety and depression are medical conditions**, not personal failures. Without support, they can affect daily life, strain relationships, and make bonding with the baby more difficult.

Getting help early improves recovery and strengthens the bond between parent and child.

Studies show that early intervention can reduce long-term stress and lead to a smoother transition into parenthood.

Physical recovery and mental health

The postpartum period is a time of **significant physical recovery**. Hormonal shifts, healing from childbirth, and disrupted sleep can all impact mood. Research shows that new mothers who experience complications such as C-sections, excessive bleeding, or prolonged healing are **more likely to report feelings of anxiety or depression**.

Physical symptoms like pain, fatigue, and hormonal fluctuations can contribute to emotional distress, making it important to prioritise self-care. Gentle movement, adequate hydration, and a nutrient-rich diet **can support both physical and mental wellbeing**.

Sleep deprivation is another key factor and while uninterrupted sleep may not be realistic, short naps and sharing responsibilities with a partner or support system can help **improve overall energy levels**.

If physical discomfort or exhaustion feels overwhelming, **speaking to a healthcare professional** can ensure that recovery is progressing as expected and that additional support is provided if needed.



The impact on bonding with the baby

Bonding with a baby is not always instant, and struggling with postpartum anxiety or depression can make this connection feel even more difficult. Emotional distress can create feelings of guilt, inadequacy, or fear of not being a 'good enough' parent.

Studies show that **early emotional contact**, such as skin-to-skin touch, eye contact, and responsive caregiving, supports a baby's development, helping to establish secure attachment and regulate their emotions. However, when a parent is experiencing anxiety or depression, engaging in these moments can feel overwhelming.

If bonding feels challenging, **small steps can help**. Holding the baby close, talking or singing to them, and responding to their cues, even when it feels difficult, can strengthen the connection over time. **Seeking support** from a health visitor, therapist, or parent support group can provide reassurance and strategies to navigate these feelings.

It is important to remember that **bonding is a process**, not a single moment, and that getting the right support can help foster a positive and loving relationship with the baby.



Partners can be affected too

Postpartum depression doesn't only affect mothers. Partners can also experience low mood, stress, and anxiety, with research suggesting up to **10% of partners report depressive symptoms** within six months of the baby's arrival. Signs include:

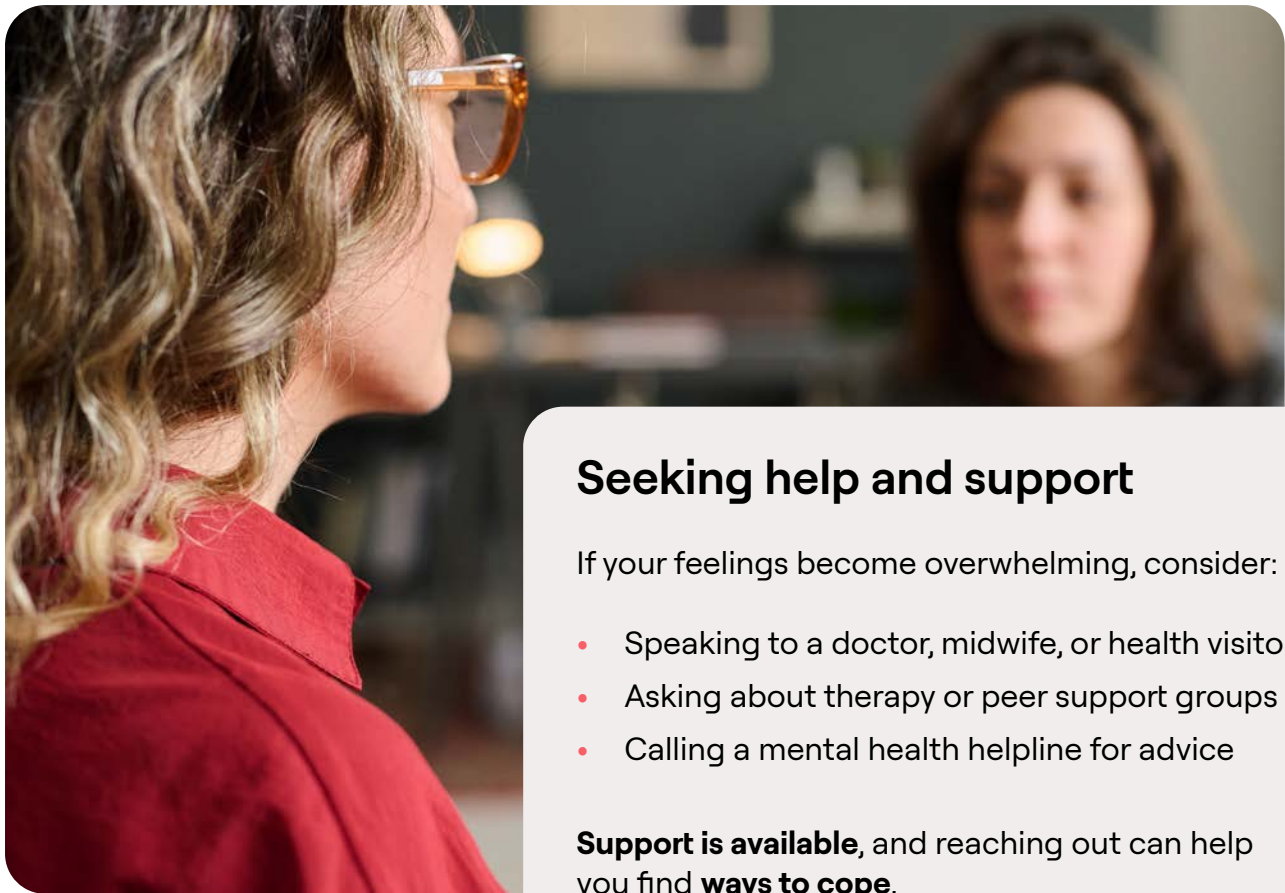
- Mood swings or irritability
- Withdrawing from family life
- Feeling overwhelmed by responsibilities
- Struggling to bond with the baby
- Avoiding home life or working excessively

Partners often feel pressure to stay strong, but **their mental health matters too**. If you're feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or disconnected, seeking support, whether from a GP, support group, or trusted friend, can make a difference.

Overcoming stigma and cultural pressures

Mental health struggles after birth can still carry stigma in some cultures, with pressure to appear strong or 'just get on with it.' Studies show that stigma is a leading reason many new parents delay seeking help. If you're struggling, try:

- **Talking to a trusted friend or relative** – Breaking the silence is the first step.
- **Seeking professional advice** – Mental health support is confidential and judgement-free.
- **Connecting with others** – Peer support groups can help normalise your feelings.



Seeking help and support

If your feelings become overwhelming, consider:

- Speaking to a doctor, midwife, or health visitor
- Asking about therapy or peer support groups
- Calling a mental health helpline for advice

Support is available, and reaching out can help you find **ways to cope**.

Simple ways to help yourself

- **Accept support** – Let friends or family help with meals, household tasks, or babysitting.
 - **Take short breaks** – A few minutes of quiet can help ease anxiety.
 - **Eat and drink regularly** – Keeping energy levels stable can support mood.
 - **Stay connected** – Talking to someone who understands can be reassuring.
 - **Be kind to yourself** – Adjusting to parenthood takes time, and there's no 'perfect' way to do it.
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How loved ones can help

Partners, friends, and family play a key role in supporting new parents:

- **Listen without judgment** – Allow them to share their feelings openly.
- **Encourage rest** – Offer to help so they can get some sleep.
- **Support them in seeking help** – Gently suggest speaking to a professional.
- **Help with practical tasks** – Cooking, cleaning, or babysitting can ease daily pressures.



Where to from here?

Postpartum anxiety and depression affect many parents, but **early steps towards support** lead to better outcomes. If you or someone you know is struggling, **don't stay silent**.

Contact [HealthHero](#) today for more guidance and support. We're with you every step of the way.