



Life with a new baby is not
always what you expect



best start
meilleur départ

Ontario's maternal, newborn and early
child development resource centre
Centre de ressources sur la maternité,
les nouveau-nés et le développement
des jeunes enfants de l'Ontario

Postpartum blues
or “baby blues” are
common.

4 in 5 new mothers
experience
postpartum blues.





Postpartum Blues or “Baby Blues”

Pregnancy, the birth of a baby, or an adoption brings physical, emotional and social changes. Adjustments to the new roles and relationships are not always easy. Almost four out of five mothers will experience the postpartum blues or “baby blues”.

You may:

- feel sad and tearful
- feel irritable
- feel exhausted
- feel overwhelmed
- have changes in your sleeping or eating pattern

This is normal. It happens in the first few days or weeks after the baby is born. It will pass in a few days or at the most two weeks. It will pass easier if you: Take care of yourself and refer to the strategies in the “What can you do?” section in this brochure. Let family and friends help you as well.

Postpartum mood disorders are real.

1 in 5 new mothers suffer from a postpartum mood disorder.



Postpartum Depression and Postpartum Mood Disorders

Sometimes the “blues” don’t go away. You may also feel this way during your pregnancy or later during the baby’s first year.

You may:

- not feel yourself
- be sad and tearful
- feel exhausted, but unable to sleep
- have changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- feel overwhelmed and can’t concentrate
- have no interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
- feel hopeless or frustrated
- feel restless, irritable or angry
- feel extremely high and full of energy
- feel anxious – you may feel this as aches, chest pain, shortness of breath, numbness, tingling or “lump” in the throat
- feel guilty and ashamed, thinking you are not a good mother
- not bond with the baby, or feel afraid to be alone with the baby
- have repeated scary thoughts about the baby
- have thoughts about harming yourself or your baby

Have you had any of these symptoms for more than two weeks?

There is help for you and your family. Don’t wait. Contact or refer to:

- your health care provider (family physician, midwife, nurse, OB/GYN, psychiatrist);
- Halton Region Health Department. To speak with a public health nurse call 311 or 905-825-6000, toll free 1-866-442-5866;
- the additional information and support resources on back page.

Postpartum mood disorders may look like this:

- 1. You tell everyone you are feeling great and they believe you, but inside you feel like a totally different person.** You are up early. You try to look perfect and get back into shape. The house is spotless and so is the baby, but you wonder how long you can keep this up.
- 2. You don't feel like yourself at all.** You can't get your head off the couch or the bed. You can't seem to take care of yourself and you don't even care if you do. You can barely take care of the baby.
- 3. You thought you would fall in love with your baby, but instead the baby scares you.** How can you look after and love this helpless baby? You don't want to take care of her, or you pass her to dad or family members. You sometimes think the baby would be better off without you.
- 4. You can't enjoy the baby, because you are always worrying about him.** Is his diaper clean? Is he getting sick? What if you dropped him? What if he slipped from your hands in the bathtub? What if he stopped breathing? You are constantly checking him. You can't even sleep and you are not letting anyone else look after him. You are getting more and more exhausted, but you can't stop worrying.
- 5. You feel so irritable.** You get angry at the least little thing. No one can do anything right: e.g. folding the laundry or changing the baby. Something did not get done the way you want it done. You know your family and friends are tiptoeing around you so they don't upset you, but you just can't stop getting angry.

Postpartum Psychosis is rare.



Postpartum Psychosis

Very rarely mothers will have postpartum psychosis.
This is a serious illness with risks to mother and baby.

You may:

- have thoughts of harming yourself or the baby
- hear or see things that are not there
- believe people or things are going to harm you or your baby
- feel confused or out of touch with reality

If you have any of these feelings or thoughts,
get help right away.

**Call your
doctor
now**

OR

**Go to your local
hospital's
emergency
department**

OR

**Call a crisis
intervention
line**



What can you do?

- **Do not blame yourself.** You are not alone in feeling the way you do. Do not feel ashamed or guilty about your thoughts and feelings. They do not make you a bad mother.
- **Ask for help.** Talk to your partner, family, friends and health care provider. Do not be ashamed of your feelings. Delaying help may delay recovery.
- **Take care of yourself.** Try to rest, eat healthy foods and get some fresh air and exercise.
- **Take time for yourself.** Accept offers for help with household chores and baby care so you can have a break.
- **Get counselling.** Attend one-to-one counselling sessions or join a support group with other parents. It is helpful to talk through your feelings in a safe and supportive environment.
- **Consider medication.** Your health care provider may recommend medication that is safe to use while breastfeeding and is not addictive.





There is help for
you and your
family.

What can a partner, family and friends do?

- **Listen and support the mother's feelings.** Encourage her to talk about her feelings. Don't tell her to "Snap out of it," or "You should be happy to have a beautiful, healthy baby." This will only make her feel worse.
- **Encourage her to seek professional help.** Assist her in finding a compassionate health care professional. Offer to go with her to appointments for added support.
- **Develop your relationship with the baby.** This can provide the mother with a much needed break.
- **Ask her how you can help.** Providing meals, doing household chores, looking after other children or listening to her will be helpful.
- **Educate yourself about postpartum mood disorders.** Be patient. It takes time to recover.
- **Take some time for yourself.** Ensure you have some time to do what you enjoy doing. You need a break too.
- **Find someone to talk to.** A postpartum mood disorder is hard on everyone. Family, friends, your health care provider or a 24-hour crisis line can provide you with needed assistance.
- **Don't take mom's PMD personally (it is not her fault or yours).** Avoid misunderstanding and frustration by communicating with your partner.

This is not your fault. There is help for you and your family.

Life with a new baby is stressful for fathers/partners and other family members as well, especially if the mother becomes depressed. They need to look after themselves and should ask for help as soon as they feel depressed or anxious, too.

Visit the following websites:

- Halton Region Health Department:
halton.ca
- Perinatal Mental Health (Middlesex London):
healthunit.com/pmh
- Pacific Postpartum Support Society: postpartum.org
- Peel Postpartum Mood Disorder Program:
pmdinpeel.ca

Crisis Help Lines

COAST – Crisis Outreach and Support Team Halton

1-877-825-9011

(Telephone support and mobile intervention for persons who have a mental health crisis/concern)

Distress Centre Halton

Burlington: 905-681-1488

Oakville: 905-849-4541

North Halton: 905-877-1211

and limited texting option; see website for availability
dchalton.ca

Remember: there is help and you will recover.

Information/Support/Counselling

A2P (Adjusting to Parenthood) Groups

Call 311 or visit

halton.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

905-693-4270

halton.cmha.ca

Halton Region Health Department

Call 311 or

1-866-442-5866

halton.ca

Halton Healthcare Services (Oakville)

905-845-2571

haltonhealthcare.on.ca

(outpatient psychotherapy services; physician referral required)

Joseph Brant Hospital Community Mental Health Services (Outpatient)

905-631-1939

josephbranthospital.ca

(For Burlington residents or women whose family doctor has privileges at JBH; referral from family physician required.)

North Halton Mental Health Clinics

905-693-4240 (Milton &

Georgetown)

519-853-9741 (Acton)

ROCK — Reach Out Centre For Kids

905-634-2347, ext. 239

rockonline.ca

(Family therapy, parenting & walk-in offices in Burlington, Oakville, Milton, Georgetown & Acton)

Thrive Counselling

(offices in Burlington, Milton, Oakville and Georgetown)

thrivecounselling.org

Trillium Health Partners Reproductive Mental Health Program

905-813-1550

trilliumhealthpartners.ca

(For women who have delivered or will deliver at THP or who have a family physician with privileges there; referrals from family physicians in Oakville, Milton, and Halton Hills are also accepted.)

Women's Health Concerns Clinic

St. Joseph's Healthcare (Hamilton)

905-522-1155, ext. 33979

stjoes.ca

**best start
meilleur départ**

Ontario's maternal, newborn and early
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Centre de ressources sur la maternité,
les nouveau-nés et le développement
des jeunes enfants de l'Ontario



Ontario
Prevention
Clearinghouse

Centre ontarien
d'information
en prévention

Best Start is a key program of the Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse.



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