

## Action Plan for Mood Changes during Pregnancy or After Giving Birth

Feeling down, mood swings, feeling anxious, overwhelmed, and scared are very common for women during and after pregnancy. If your feelings are impacting your life or your ability to care for you or your baby, we want to make sure you have the resources and support you need. If a few of these feelings sound like you, see below for what you can do.

If you...	You may be experiencing emotional changes that happen to many pregnant individuals and new parents. You should...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feel like you just aren't yourself</li> <li>Have trouble managing your emotions (ups and/or downs)</li> <li>Feel overwhelmed, but are still able to care for yourself and your baby</li> <li>Feel mild irritability</li> <li>Have slight difficulty falling asleep</li> <li>Have occasional difficulty focusing on a task</li> <li>Are less hungry than usual</li> </ul>	<p>Take special care of yourself. Get your partner to watch the baby, get a babysitter, or team up with another person to share childcare so that you can rest and exercise.</p> <p>Continue to watch for the signs of emotional mood changes in the yellow and red sections below.</p> <p>Find someone to talk to if things get worse. Talk to a health care provider if you feel unsure.</p>

If you...	You may be experiencing emotional changes during or after your pregnancy for which you should get help. You should...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feel intense uneasiness that hits with no warning</li> <li>Feel foggy and have more difficulty completing tasks than usual</li> <li>Notice that you have stopped doing things that you used to enjoy</li> <li>Have scary or upsetting thoughts that don't go away</li> <li>Feel guilty, or are having thoughts that you are failing at motherhood</li> <li>Are having difficulty falling or staying asleep (that doesn't have to do with getting up with your baby)</li> <li>Are falling behind with your job or schoolwork, or struggling in your relationships with family and/or friends</li> <li>Have family/friends mention that your mood seems off, or you're not acting like your usual self</li> <li>Are being overwhelmed by feelings of worry</li> <li>Have periods of feeling really "up," and overly happy where you are doing more activities than usual, then feel very sad, "down," or hopeless</li> <li>Are taking risks you usually wouldn't</li> <li>Are on edge or always looking out for possible danger/threats</li> <li>Feel numb or detached, like you are just going through the motions</li> <li>Have no interest in eating – food tastes like nothing</li> <li>Have thoughts of hurting yourself</li> </ul>	<p>Contact us. Your mental health is important to us. We are here to help.</p> <p>Talk to your partner, family, and friends about these feelings so they can help you.</p> <p>Contact your insurance company to find mental health providers.</p> <p>Visit the Anxiety and Depression Association of America's telehealth providers: <a href="https://adaa.org/finding-help/telemental-health/provider_listing">https://adaa.org/finding-help/telemental-health/provider_listing</a></p> <p>Call Postpartum Support International (PSI) 1-800-944-4773 (voice in English or Spanish), 800-944-4773 (text in English), 971-203-7773 (text in Spanish), to contact a volunteer who can provide support and resources in your area, or search online for a mental health provider at <a href="https://psidirectory.com/">https://psidirectory.com/</a></p> <p>Search the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at <a href="https://www.ptsd.va.gov/">https://www.ptsd.va.gov/</a></p> <p>Read or complete workbook materials: <i>Pregnancy &amp; Postpartum Anxiety Workbook</i> by Pamela S. Wiegartz and Kevin Gyoerkoe</p>

If you...	Get help now!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feel hopeless and in total despair</li> <li>Feel out of touch with reality (you may see or hear things that other people don't)</li> <li>Feel that you may hurt yourself or your baby</li> <li>Have family/friends that are worried about your or other's safety due to your mood swings and/or changes in activity levels</li> </ul>	<p>Go to the local emergency room or call <b>9-1-1</b> for immediate help.</p> <p>Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at <b>1-800-273-TALK (8255)</b> for free and confidential emotional support</p> <p>Text the Crisis Line at 741741 (US) or 686868 (Canada)</p> <p>Still not sure what to do? Call us and we'll figure it out together</p>

**Getting help is the best thing you can do for yourself and your baby. Your mental health is important to us, please call us with any concerns or questions. We are here to help.**

## Self-Care Plan

Your life may feel drastically changed during this time, and feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or sad are very common and understandable responses. It can be hard to cope with problems when you're feeling sad and have little energy. A self-care plan can be a useful tool to help you attend to your own wellness needs, and those of your baby.



1. **Make time for pleasurable activities.** Commit to scheduling some simple and enjoyable activity each day.  
 Things I find pleasurable include: \_\_\_\_\_  
 During the week I will spend at least \_\_\_\_\_ minutes doing (choose one or more of activity to try in the coming week) \_\_\_\_\_



2. **Stay physically active.** Make sure you make time to do some activity, even a few minutes of activity can be helpful.  
 During the week, I will spend at least \_\_\_\_\_ minutes doing (write in activities) \_\_\_\_\_



3. **Ask for help.** Look to those in your life who you can ask for help - for example your husband or partner, your parents, other relatives, your friends.  
 People I can ask to help me: \_\_\_\_\_  
 During the week I will ask at least \_\_\_\_\_ person/people for help.



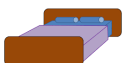
4. **Talk or spend time with people who can support you.** Explain to friends or loved ones how you feel. If you can't talk about it, that's OK – you can still ask them to be with you or join you for an activity.  
 People I find supportive include \_\_\_\_\_. During the week, I will contact \_\_\_\_\_ (name/s) and try to talk with them \_\_\_\_\_ times.



5. **Belly breathing** is about breathing in a specific way that triggers your body's natural calming response.
  - Begin by slowly bringing your breath to a steady, even pace.
  - Focus on breathing in from the very bottom of your belly, almost as if from your hips/pelvis.
  - See if you can breathe in a way that makes your belly stick out on the in-breath and deflate totally on the out-breath. Your chest and shoulders should stay quite still, it's all about breathing with your belly!
  - Any amount of time you can find to do this can help. Aim to practice 10-15 minutes at least twice daily.



6. **Mindful breathing** helps bring awareness into the present moment using our body's natural rhythm of breath. Bring your attention to your own natural rhythm of breath.
  - Notice physical sensations with breathing, such as the textures of clothing or movement of body.
  - When your mind offers a distraction, notice this, and bring your attention back to the physical sensation of natural breath. Try and notice temperature of the in-breath and out-breath or notice the precise moment in the rhythm where an in-breath becomes an out-breath.
  - Practice this when you feel like you could use some present moment grounding.



7. **Sleep is a very important part of self-care.** Here are some helpful strategies to try to help you sleep better at night.
  - Watch how much caffeine you take in. Caffeine stays in the body for 10-12 hours. Consider limiting coffee, tea, soda, chocolate, and energy drinks, and setting a cut-off point during the day (such as lunchtime) to stop drinking or eating caffeine.
  - Set a routine. Set regular times for going to bed and waking up, even if you slept poorly the night before. Set up a relaxing routine 1-2 hours before bed where you do something calming and limit your exposure to electronics and light. Getting into a routine will train your body to prepare for sleep near bedtime.
  - Keep the bedroom mellow. Only use your bed for sleep and sexual activity. This helps your body link the bed with sleep, rather than other things that keep you awake. Keep your bedroom dark and cool and move your clock to prevent you from constantly checking it through the night.



8. **Simple goals and small steps.** Break goals down into small steps and give yourself credit for each step you finish.