



Maternal Mental Health: Taking Care of New Moms

New and expecting mothers face not only changes to their lifestyles, but also changes to their bodies and hormones. Each woman's experience will be different. For some, accommodating the changes of pregnancy and having a baby may come easily—they will adopt new routines and their bodies will return to pre-pregnancy shape and chemistry with little difficulty. For others, there may be physical and mental health struggles that arise.

85% of new moms experience “baby blues” in the first 2-3 weeks after birth.

Maternal mental health (MMH) disorders typically occur in what is called the perinatal period. This includes the prenatal period, or time that a woman is pregnant, and the postpartum period, which is the first year after the baby has been born. Depression is the most common maternal mental health disorder, followed by anxiety disorders (Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Birth-related PTSD), bipolar disorder and, on very rare occasions, postpartum psychosis.

MMH conditions are among the most common complications of pregnancy and childbirth. MMH conditions are caused by a combination of changes in biology, psychology and environment and can impact how a mother cares for herself and her child.

The “baby blues” are a normal period of transition affecting up to 85% of new mothers in the first 2-3 weeks after baby is born. Baby blues typically include emotional sensitivity, weepiness, and/or feeling overwhelmed. Baby blues resolve without treatment.

But for some women, these emotions are more serious and may stay for months. Referred to as postpartum depression (PPD). One significant risk for PPD is a previous PPD episode. Women at increased risk of MMH conditions are those

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Need someone to talk to?

Call the
National Maternal
Health Hotline at
1-833-943-5746
(1-833-9-HELP4MOMS)



who have a personal or family history of mental illness; lack social support, especially from their partner; experienced a traumatic birth or previous trauma in their lives; or have a baby in the neonatal intensive care unit.

Fortunately, maternal mental health conditions are often temporary and treatable. And that's why a new mom, or those supporting them, should reach out right away for help. Talk with your health care provider or call the confidential National Maternal Mental Health Hotline: **1-833-943-5746 (1-833-9-HELP4MOMS)**.

The MMH hotline provides 24/7 voice and text support in English and Spanish, and translation services in an additional 60 languages. Calls are answered by certified mental health and maternal health providers, along with certified peer specialists, who provide support, encouragement, information and resources.

The importance of practicing self-care as a new mom

Becoming a new mom is a joyous and fulfilling experience, but it can also be incredibly demanding and exhausting. With the round-the-clock care that a newborn requires, it's easy for new moms to overlook their own needs and well-being. However, self-care is crucial for new moms to maintain their physical, emotional and mental health. Here are some practical tips on how new moms can manage self-care.

How to Get It Done:

- Plan and schedule time for self-care activities.
- Get help from family and friends by delegating some of the baby care responsibilities, this will allow you to have some free time to focus on self-care.
- Get your groceries delivered and have a friend over to cook with you.
- Use nap time wisely! You can use your baby's nap time to take a quick nap yourself, take a relaxing bath or shower, or do something enjoyable like reading or meditating.
- Do some light stretching or exercise while the baby is playing or do some deep breathing exercises while feeding the baby.
- Incorporate self-care activities that include your baby, such as going for a walk together, doing some baby yoga or massage, or taking a relaxing bath together.
- Take advantage of technology. There are many apps and online resources available that can help new moms with self-care, such as meditation apps, workout videos and online support groups.
- Attend a local meet up group or support group for new moms. Check with your regional medical centers near you to see if they have these types of offerings.
 - St. Luke's hospital has a 'Moms Meet Up' support group in Meridian and Boise, and also 'Breastfeeding Support' groups located in Caldwell, Meridian and Boise. Information on both can be found on this [flyer](#).
 - St. Alphonsus hospital also offers a 'Baby and Me' support group to Treasure Valley residents that is free of charge. You'll find more information [here](#).

Remember that self-care is not about being perfect. It's about making small changes that help you feel more rested, energized and balanced. Overall, managing self-care as a new mom requires planning, flexibility and support.

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