




National University  
Polyclinics

# Postpartum Depression



Adapted from the National University  
Hospital Women's Emotional Health Service  
(WEHS) patient education resources

Disclaimer: This booklet is intended for educational and informative purposes only and is not intended to replace medical or professional advice. You should always consult a doctor for information related to medical conditions, diagnoses, and/or treatment.

# Introduction

Motherhood marks an exciting transition into a new phase in life but for many women, this is also an extremely stressful period where many psychological, social and physical changes are taking place. This can bring about mental health issues which can have negative effects on both the mother and her child if left untreated.

Mood and anxiety disorders can happen to anyone.

It is not your fault.

The earlier you seek treatment, the better the outcome.



# "Am I thinking too much?"

We have all experienced anxiety and worries before, especially in times of increased stress and change. While pregnancy can be a joyous occasion, the arrival of a baby also represents a major life event. As you enter into a new phase of life, it is only natural to experience uncomfortable emotions such as anxiety and fear.

## Worrying vs Anxiety Disorder - Where to draw the line?

So you may wonder, "Since it's normal to be worried, why should I bother?" While a certain level of worrying is expected, there is a difference between worrying and anxiety.

	Worrying	Anxiety disorder
How long does it last?	Short periods of time	More persistent
Does it affect your functioning?	Able to go about your usual routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Affects daily functions such as sleep and appetite</li><li>• Difficulty focusing on tasks</li><li>• Relationships with loved ones/ friends might be affected</li></ul>
Is it specific to a particular topic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specific to a particular concern</li><li>• Goal-directed</li><li>• Focused on problem-solving</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May not have a specific trigger</li><li>• More vague and ruminative</li></ul>

**If you experience any of the symptoms below for more than two weeks, please seek treatment early.**

### Common symptoms of an anxiety disorder include:

- Feeling anxious for most or all of the time and not being able to control it
- Restlessness
- Excessive worrying (for example, about your health or baby's health)
- Feeling a sense of dread
- Difficulty concentrating or feeling like your mind goes blank
- Irritability
- Feeling constantly on edge
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep



# "I feel sad all the time"

## What is Postpartum Depression (PPD)?

- PPD may be mistaken for baby blues at first, but the signs and symptoms are more intense, persist beyond 2 weeks and it may affect your ability to care for yourself and your baby.

PPD often develops within the first few months after giving birth, particularly in the first 5 weeks. However, it can start at any time during the first year.

In Singapore, about 1 in 10 women suffers from PPD.

	Baby Blues	Postpartum Depression
When?	About 2 weeks	Lasts beyond 2 weeks
How severe is it?	Mild, usually resolves on its own	Ranges from mild to severe symptoms and affects daily activities
What should I do?	Seek support from family and friends, and monitor condition	Seek medical help as soon as possible!

## Certain circumstances may make you more vulnerable to PPD, such as:

- History of depression or other mental illnesses
- Lack of adequate support from family and friends
- Financial, work or relationship problems
- Pregnancy and labour complications
- A premature baby or unwell baby who requires a lot of attention
- Breastfeeding difficulties



- However, PPD usually results from a few contributing factors, and any mother can be affected by it after delivery of her baby

# Do you have these symptoms?

## Feelings:

- Low/sad mood
- Irritability
- Tearfulness
- Hopelessness
- Guilt
- Anger
- Worry/Panic



## Behaviour:

- Extreme tiredness with no energy
- Loss of interest in activities
- Poor sleep
- Lack of appetite
- Physical symptoms such as body aches
- Excessive checking on baby

## Thoughts:

- Negative feelings towards your baby
- Thoughts of harming self or baby
- Suicidal thoughts



**What should I do if I experience these symptoms?**

PPD can be treated. Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have symptoms of PPD as soon as possible.

# Myths & Facts

## **Only women experience baby blues and postpartum depression (PPD).**

Fathers experience PPD too and typically have the same symptoms as mothers (e.g. persistent low mood, irritability, sleep problems, fatigue, etc). A study found that up to 10% of new fathers experience PPD, usually in the first 3-6 months after the baby is born. A new father is also more likely to be depressed if their partner is experiencing PPD. Treatment for fathers is similar to what mothers will receive too.

## **PPD will just go away if left alone.**

PPD may not go away by itself and it can last for months or years. PPD can be treated and it is important that you seek help early. Talk to your doctor or nurse if you think you have PPD.



## **Having PPD means I am incompetent or weak.**

This is untrue. Feelings of being a failure could be a symptom of PPD. It is definitely not a reflection of your ability as a parent. It is all right to speak to a professional and seek help when you need it.

## **PPD can be prevented.**

Unfortunately, you cannot do anything to prevent PPD. There will always be a risk of developing PPD. However, there are self-care tips for you to minimise that risk and to promote mental wellbeing for yourself and your baby

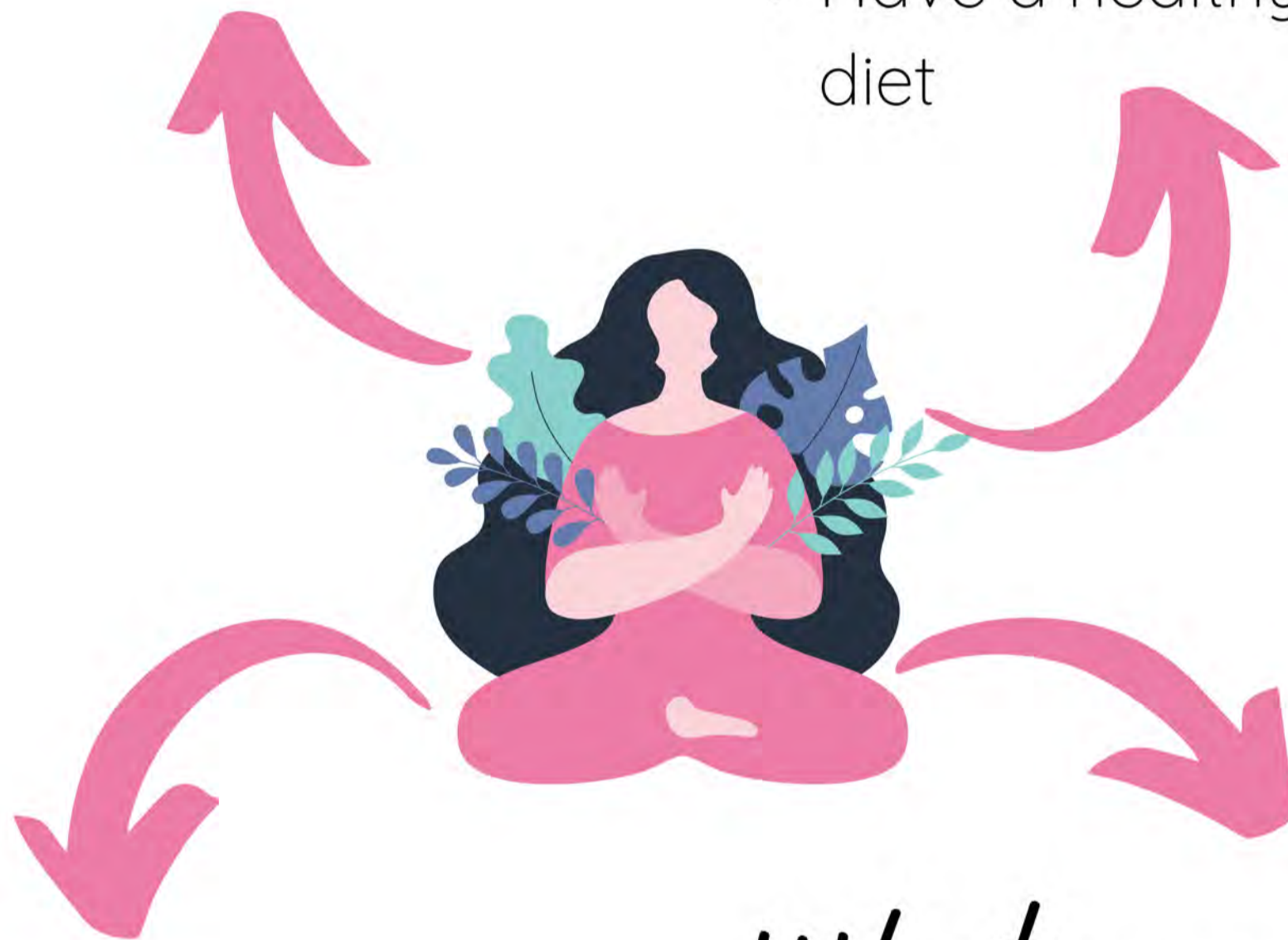
# Caring for mind and body

## Sleep well

- Create a relaxing bedroom environment
- Avoid stimulation from devices/caffeine at bedtime
- Sleep when baby sleeps

## Healthy body

- Exercise regularly - start with light exercise then increase duration and frequency
- Aim for 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week
- Have a healthy and well balanced diet



## Self-Care

- Make time and do something that makes you happy!
- Start journalling. Writing a journal provides a safe space to process your thoughts and emotions
- Take a break and rest if you need to
- Break down tasks into smaller portions and prioritise

## What can fathers do?

- Read up on parenting, share thoughts and feelings with each other
- Adjust routines so that fathers can help out with caring for baby and household chores
- Listen to each other's concerns openly, ask how your partner would like to be supported
- Affirm and appreciate your partner
- Set aside couple time

# "How can I get help?"

Speak to our doctors/nurses at the polyclinic **TODAY!**



## Others:

NUH Women's Emotional Health Service  
Tel: 6772 2037 • Email: [wehs@nuhs.edu.sg](mailto:wehs@nuhs.edu.sg)  
Mon-Thu: 8am-5.30pm; Fri: 8am-5pm

KKH Women's Mental Wellness Service  
Email: [pnd@kkh.com.sg](mailto:pnd@kkh.com.sg)

## Community Services

**Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)**  
Tel: 1-767 (1SOS) (24-hour hotline)

**Family Service Centres**  
Find the nearest FSC to your home  
via [www.msf.gov.sg](http://www.msf.gov.sg)

**Care Corner Counselling Hotline**  
(Mandarin)  
Tel: 1800 3535 800 (10am-10pm)

**Family Violence Specialist Centres**

- PAVE, Tel: 6555 0390
- TRANS SAFE Centre, Tel: 6449 9088
- Care Corner Project StART, Tel: 6476 1482

## Web Resources

**The Gottman Institute**  
Tips for a research-based approach to  
relationships  
[www.instagram.com/gottmaninstitute/](http://www.instagram.com/gottmaninstitute/)

**Just In Time Parenting**  
Parenting information [www.jitp.info](http://www.jitp.info)

**Centre for Clinical Interventions  
(CCI)**  
<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au>

## Apps

### **Mindfulness**

- Smiling Mind
- Headspace
- Calm
- Mindful Mamas
- Expectful Meditation & Sleep

### **Mindful journalling**

- Reflectly
- Daylio
- Happyfeed
- Jour

### **Parenting**

- Small moments big impact
- Baby Tips: Parental guide
- Parent Cue
- Kinedu: Baby Development Plan
- Playfully Baby Development

## Support Groups for Mothers

**Mindful Mums Support Group**  
[www.moremindful.me/mindful-mums](http://www.moremindful.me/mindful-mums)  
Tel: 6823 1222  
Email: [secretary@moremindful.me](mailto:secretary@moremindful.me)

**Breastfeeding Mothers' Support Group**  
[www.breastfeeding.org.sg](http://www.breastfeeding.org.sg) • Tel: 6339 3558

**Tanglin Mother and Child Centre**  
Tel: 6836 0063