

Perinatal Mood Disorders

The entire period of pregnancy up to one year after delivery is considered the perinatal period. Pregnancy and caring for a new baby can be one of the most joyful and exciting times in a woman's life, but it is natural for a woman to experience changes in her feelings and mood during the perinatal period. A perinatal mood disorder can affect women of any race, age, or economic background and can occur with any pregnancy or birth. This disorder is not a sign of weakness but a medical condition and can be treated with professional help.

It can be very difficult to recognize or admit feelings of depression or anxiety at a time when moms are supposed to be happy.

There is no way to determine who will have a perinatal mood disorder, but here are some factors that may contribute:

- Changes in hormone levels
- A loss of a pregnancy
- A difficult pregnancy
- A difficult birth
- Medical or financial problems
- Lack of sleep
- Feeling alone
- Family stress
- Sudden changes in routine
- Personal or family history of depression
- Prior postpartum depression or perinatal mood disorders

What are the symptoms?

You may experience several of the following symptoms, either during pregnancy or after childbirth:

- Sadness that does not go away
- Crying a lot
- Feeling anxious or nervous
- Not feeling emotions
- Worrying more than usual
- Trouble concentrating
- Lack of energy
- Eating or sleeping more or less than usual
- Not interested in activities
- Not wanting to be with people
- Not interested in your baby
- Scary thoughts about the baby or other family members
- Fear of hurting your baby or yourself
- Feeling worthless
- Feeling guilty

It is important to seek help if symptoms last longer than 2 weeks, or if symptoms are severe or worrisome to you, your family or friends.

If I think I am depressed or anxious what should I do?

Experiencing any of these symptoms may make you feel frightened and lonely. Help is available for women with mood disorders during pregnancy and the postpartum period. Current treatments may include support therapy, medication, and treatments that don't require medication such as uninterrupted sleep, exercise, and good nutrition.

What services does UNC offer for perinatal mood disorders?

Services include UNC Perinatal Mood Disorder Outpatient Clinic and Perinatal Mood Disorders Inpatient Unit.

UNC Perinatal Mood Disorder Outpatient Clinic (984) 974-5217 (choose #3)

Assessment, treatment, and ongoing support are provided through our outpatient clinic

- Medication management during pregnancy and lactation
- Psychotherapy, counseling for women and their partners
- Magnet therapy

Perinatal Mood Disorders Inpatient Unit (intake counselor- (984) 974-3834)

The unit provides assessment and treatment, including medication stabilization as well as individual and group counseling.

- Protected sleep times
- Extended visiting hours to maximize positive mother-baby interaction
- Hospital grade pumps, supplies and refrigerator for milk storage
- Nursing staff trained in postpartum and antepartum care
- Lactation Consultation
- OB/GYN Consultation
- Mother-infant attachment therapy
- Group therapies including art, relaxation, spiritual, biofeedback, exercise, behavioral, and psychoeducation for patients, partners, and families
- Yoga, nutrition consultation, chaplain support
- Discharge planning and transition to outpatient treatment

Resources:

- NC Family Health Resource (800) 367-2229 www.nchealthystart.org
- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (800) 762-2264 www.acog.com
- National Women's Health Information Center (800) 944-WOMAN www.4woman.gov
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
www.mchb.hrsa.gov/pregnancyandbeyond/depression
- Postpartum Support International (PSI) Postpartum.net or 1-800-944-4773
- Postpartum Education and Support (PES) pesnc.org or 919-454-6946