

How to help patients with postpartum depression

 pages.azblue.com/Perinatal-mental-illness-How-you-can-help---MAY-2022.html

[Sign in – Secure Provider Portal](#) 



According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health, one out of nine new mothers experiences postpartum depression.¹ It can also occur in fathers.² Depression and other forms of perinatal mental illness can lead to adverse and sometimes catastrophic outcomes for parents and infants. Getting help early can mitigate risk and prevent serious illness.

 [In This Issue](#)

[Take a virtual tour of member ID cards](#)

Why getting help early can be particularly challenging

Both men and women may struggle silently with postpartum depression and other perinatal mental illness. Expectant parents envision great joy and happiness with a newborn child. When that expectation is overshadowed by a perinatal mental health disorder, parents may experience shame and perceive themselves as inadequate in meeting their child's needs. It is difficult to talk about emotions that are attached to shame, so asking for help in these circumstances may be delayed or avoided.

What you can do to help patients get the care they need for healthy parenting

Healthcare providers are well-positioned to make a difference for parents who suffer from perinatal mental illness. Here's how you can help:

- Educate expectant parents about the [symptoms of perinatal mental illness](#).³
- Inform them that subclinical and time-limited emotional symptoms can be a normal and common outcome of the challenges of having a baby.

- Explain the risks and potential consequences of more persistent or worsening untreated symptoms as well as the importance of getting help right away.
- Encourage both parents to monitor themselves and each other for symptoms.
- Advise them to contact you immediately if symptoms occur and let them know you will help them take the necessary steps to protect themselves and their baby.
- Screen for prenatal or postpartum mood and anxiety disorders; Postpartum Support International (PSI) recommends the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Screen (EPDS) or Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9).⁴
- Give patients referral options for behavioral health providers who have specific training in perinatal mental health.

Importance of specialized training in perinatal mental health

Perinatal mental health continues to be a growing area of research and clinical need. To safely address potential issues for parents and children, it's essential to incorporate screening and seek assistance from behavioral health clinicians with expertise in this area. PSI offers [training opportunities](#), downloadable [patient education materials](#), and assistance with finding trained providers. You can access their directory to find qualified perinatal mental health professionals at <https://psidirectory.com/arizona>. The [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) offers free, 24/7 support for people in distress.

Please share this information with your staff.

¹ Source: [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health, "Postpartum depression"](#)

² Source: [National Center for Biotechnology Information, "Postpartum Depression in Men" \(*Innovations in Clinical Neuroscience*, May 1, 2019\)](#)

³ Source: [Postpartum Support International \(PSI\), "Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders \(PMADS\)"](#)

⁴ Source: [PSI, "Screening Recommendations"](#)

Our members can take a digital ID card with them wherever they go with the MyBlue AZSM mobile app.

