

# Action Plan for Depression and Anxiety Around Pregnancy

Having a baby brings a mix of emotions, including feeling sad and feeling overwhelmed. Many women experience deeper signs of depression and anxiety before and after birth. Be prepared. **Watch for the signs.**

## If you...

- Feel like you just aren't yourself
- Have trouble managing your emotions
- Feel overwhelmed but are still able to care for yourself and your baby

## You may be experiencing mood swings that happen to many pregnant women and new moms.

**These feelings typically go away after a couple of weeks.**

- Take special care of yourself. Get your partner to watch the baby, get a babysitter, or team up with another mom to share child care so that you can rest and exercise.
- Continue to watch for the signs of depression and anxiety in the yellow and red sections below. If things get worse, find someone to talk to. Talk to a health care provider if you feel unsure.

## If you...

- Have feelings of intense anxiety that hit with no warning
- Feel foggy and have difficulty completing tasks
- Feel "robotic," like you are just going through the motions
- Have little interest in things that you used to enjoy
- Feel very anxious around the baby and your other children
- Have scary, upsetting thoughts that don't go away
- Feel guilty and feel like you are failing at motherhood

## You may be experiencing postpartum depression and anxiety.

**These feelings will not go away on their own.**

- Get help. Contact your health care provider or visit a clinic.
- Call Postpartum Support International at **1-800-944-4PPD (4773)** to speak to a volunteer who can provide support and resources in your area.
- Talk to your partner, family, and friends about these feelings so they can help you.

## If you...

- Feel hopeless and total despair
- Feel out of touch with reality (you may see or hear things that other people don't)
- Feel that you may hurt yourself or your baby

## Get help now!

- Call **9-1-1** for immediate help.
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** for free and confidential emotional support—they talk about more than suicide.
- Call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Helpline at **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** for 24-hour free and confidential mental health information, treatment, and recovery services referral in English and Spanish.

## Depression and Anxiety Happen. **Getting Help Matters.**

To learn more, visit [nichd.nih.gov/MaternalMentalHealth](https://nichd.nih.gov/MaternalMentalHealth).  
To find a mental health provider in your area, call **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**.



Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute  
of Child Health and Human Development





# Listening and Acting Quickly

could help save her life

**HEAR**<sup>TM</sup>  
HEAR HER CONCERNS

## How Can You Help?

If a pregnant or recently pregnant woman expresses concerns about any symptoms she is having, take the time to Hear Her. Listening and acting quickly could help save her life.

- Learn the urgent maternal warning signs.
- Listen to her concerns.
- Encourage her to seek medical help. If something doesn't feel right, she should reach out to her provider. If she is experiencing an urgent maternal warning sign, she should get medical care right away. Be sure that she says she is pregnant or was pregnant within the last year.
- Offer to go with her to get medical care and help her ask questions. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hearher/pregnant-postpartum-women/index.html#talk>.
- Take notes and help her talk to a healthcare provider to get the support she needs.
- Support her through follow-up care.

## Urgent Maternal Warning Signs

If someone who is pregnant or was pregnant within the last year has any of these symptoms, she should get medical care immediately.

- Severe headache that won't go away or gets worse over time
- Dizziness or fainting
- Thoughts about harming yourself or your baby
- Changes in your vision
- Fever of 100.4° F or higher
- Extreme swelling of your hands or face
- Trouble breathing
- Chest pain or fast-beating heart
- Severe nausea and throwing up (*not like morning sickness*)
- Severe belly pain that doesn't go away
- Baby's movement stopping or slowing down during pregnancy
- Vaginal bleeding or fluid leaking during pregnancy
- Heavy vaginal bleeding or fluid leaking that smells bad after pregnancy
- Swelling, redness or pain of your leg
- Overwhelming tiredness

*This list is not meant to cover every symptom a woman might experience during or after pregnancy. Learn more about urgent maternal warning signs at [cdc.gov/HearHer](https://www.cdc.gov/HearHer).*

## Hear Her

Pregnancy complications can happen up to a year after birth. If your loved one shares that something doesn't feel right, support her to get the care and answers she may need. Learn the urgent warning signs that need immediate medical attention. Here are some talking points to help with the conversation:

### During Pregnancy

- It's hard to tell what's normal with everything that's changing right now. It's better to check if there's anything you are worried about.
- It's important that we share this information with your doctor and make sure everything is okay.
- I am here for you. Let's talk to a healthcare provider to get you the care you need.

### After Pregnancy

- It's normal to feel tired and have some pain after giving birth, but you know your body best. If something is worrying you, you should talk to your doctor.
- Although your new baby needs a lot of attention and care, it's important to take care of yourself, too.
- You are not alone. I hear you. Let's talk to a healthcare provider to get you the care you need.

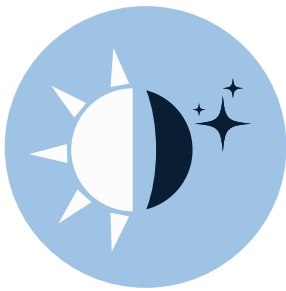


**If you need additional support, don't be afraid to ask for help.**  
Learn more about CDC's Hear Her Campaign at [www.cdc.gov/HearHer](https://www.cdc.gov/HearHer).



# Not Feeling Like Yourself?

## Let's Talk About It.



**Always  
Free — 24/7**



**Support &  
Resources**



**Confidential  
Call & Text**



**60+  
Languages**



**Don't wait. Reach out today.  
1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)**

# Pregnant now or within the last year?

Get medical care right away if you experience any of the following symptoms:



**Headache that won't go away or gets worse over time**



**Dizziness or fainting**



**Changes in your vision**



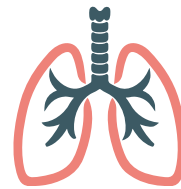
**Fever of 100.4°F or higher**



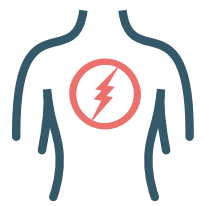
**Extreme swelling of your hands or face**



**Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby**



**Trouble breathing**



**Chest pain or fast beating heart**



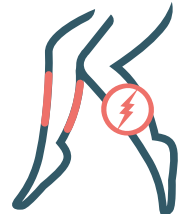
**Severe nausea and throwing up**



**Severe belly pain that doesn't go away**



**Baby's movement stopping or slowing during pregnancy**



**Severe swelling, redness or pain of your leg or arm**



**Vaginal bleeding or fluid leaking during pregnancy**



**Heavy vaginal bleeding or discharge after pregnancy**



**Overwhelming tiredness**

These could be signs of very serious complications. If you can't reach a healthcare provider, go to the emergency room. Be sure to tell them you are pregnant or were pregnant within the last year.



**Learn more at**  
**[cdc.gov/HearHer](https://cdc.gov/HearHer)**



**HEAR**<sup>®</sup>  
HEAR HER CONCERNS



**You know your body best.**

If you experience something that seems unusual or is worrying you, don't ignore it.

**HEAR**  
HEAR HER CONCERNS

## Learn about urgent warning signs and how to talk to your healthcare provider.

If you are pregnant or gave birth within the last year, it's important to talk to your healthcare provider about anything that doesn't feel right.

If you experience any of these warning signs, get medical care immediately:

- Severe headache that won't go away or gets worse over time
- Dizziness or fainting
- Thoughts about harming yourself or your baby
- Changes in your vision
- Fever of 100.4° F or higher
- Extreme swelling of your hands or face
- Trouble breathing
- Chest pain or fast-beating heart
- Severe nausea and throwing up (*not like morning sickness*)
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- Overwhelming tiredness

Learn more about CDC's Hear Her Campaign at [www.cdc.gov/HearHer](https://www.cdc.gov/HearHer).

## Use This Guide to Help Start the Conversation:

- Thank you for seeing me. I am/was recently pregnant. The date of my last period/delivery was \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm having serious concerns about my health that I'd like to talk to you about.
- I have been having \_\_\_\_\_ (symptoms) that feel like \_\_\_\_\_ (describe in detail) and have been lasting \_\_\_\_\_ (number of hours/days).
- I know my body and this doesn't feel normal.

## Sample questions to ask:

- What could these symptoms mean?
- Is there a test I can have to rule out a serious problem?
- At what point should I consider going to the emergency room or calling 911?

### Notes:

### Tips:

- Bring this conversation starter and any additional questions you want to ask to your provider.
- Be sure to tell them that you are pregnant or have been pregnant within a year.
- Tell the doctor or nurse what medication you are currently taking or have recently taken.
- Take notes and ask more questions about anything you didn't understand.