

Action Plan for Mood Changes During Pregnancy or After Giving Birth

It is common for women to feel down, have mood swings, feel anxious, overwhelmed, and scared, during and after pregnancy. If you are experiencing any of the following there are resources to help and support you.

If you...

- Feel like you just aren't yourself
- Have trouble managing your emotions (ups and/or downs)
- Feel overwhelmed, but are still able to care for yourself and your baby
- Feel mild irritability
- Have slight difficulty falling asleep
- Have occasional difficulty focusing on a task
- Are less hungry than usual

You should...

- Take special care of yourself. Use the tools on the Self-Care Plan.
- Talk to your partner, your mother, or a friend about how you're feeling.
- Read or complete workbook materials: Pregnancy & Postpartum Anxiety Workbook by Pamela S Wiegartz and Kevin Gyoerkoe.
- Continue to watch for signs of emotional mood changes in the yellow and red sections below.

If you...

- feel intense uneasiness with no warning
- feel foggy/have more difficulty completing tasks
- have stopped doing things that you enjoy
- have scary/upsetting thoughts that don't go away
- feel guilty/think you are failing at motherhood
- have difficulty falling or staying asleep (not due to being up with your baby)
- are falling behind with your job or schoolwork.
- are struggling in your relationships with family and/or friends
- people mention your mood seems off/you're not acting like your usual self
- are overwhelmed by feelings of worry
- have periods of feeling really "up," then feel very sad, "down," or hopeless
- are taking risks you usually wouldn't take
- are on edge/always looking out for danger/threats
- feel numb or detached, like you are just going through the motions
- have no interest in eating/food tastes like nothing

You should...

Reach out for help:

- Call Kaiser Permanente Maternity Call Center: **855-327-0497**, or
- Call Kaiser Permanente Behavioral Health: **866-530-8778**, or
- Send a message to your OB provider on **kp.org**, or
- Call Postpartum Support International: **800-944-4773**, or
- Call the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline: **833-852-6262**.



If you...

- Feel hopeless and in 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
- Have family/friends that are worried about your or other's safety due to your mood swings and/or changes in activity levels

Get help now!

- **Go to the local emergency room or call 911.**
- **Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 988.**

Self-Care Plan

Your life may feel drastically changed during this time. Feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or sad are common and understandable responses. It can be hard to cope with problems when you're feeling sad and have less energy. A self-care plan can be a useful tool to help meet your own wellness needs, and those of your baby.



1. **Make time for pleasurable activities.** Commit to scheduling some simple and enjoyable activity each day. Things I find pleasurable include: _____
During the week I will spend at least _____ minutes doing (choose one or more of activity to try in the coming week) _____



2. **Stay physically active.** Make time to do some physical activity, even a few minutes of activity can be helpful. During the week, I will spend at least _____ minutes doing (write in activities) _____



3. **Ask for help.** Look to people in your life who you can ask for help - for example your partner, your parents, other relatives, your friends. People I can ask to help me: _____
During the week I will ask at least _____ person/people for help.



4. **Talk or spend time with people who can support you.** Tell friends or loved ones how you feel. If you can't talk about it, that's OK - you can still ask them to be with you or join you for an activity.
People I find supportive include _____. During the week, I will contact _____ (name/s) and try to talk with them _____ times.



5. **Belly breathing is about breathing** in a specific way that triggers your body's natural calming response.

- Begin by slowly bringing your breath to a steady, even pace.
- Focus on breathing in from the very bottom of your belly, almost as if from your hips/pelvis.
- See if you can breathe in a way that makes your belly stick out on the in-breath and deflate totally on the out-breath. Your chest and shoulders should stay quite still, it's all about breathing with your belly!
- Any amount of time you can find to do this can help. Aim to practice 10-15 minutes at least twice daily.



6. **Mindful breathing** helps bring awareness into the present moment using our body's natural rhythm of breath. Bring your attention to your own natural rhythm of breath.

- Notice physical sensations with breathing, such as the textures of clothing or movement of body.
- When your mind wanders, notice this, and bring your attention back to the physical sensation of natural breath. Try and notice temperature of the in-breath and out-breath or notice the precise moment in the rhythm where an in-breath becomes an out-breath.
- Practice this when you feel like you could use some present moment grounding.



7. **Sleep is a very important part of self-care.** Here are some helpful strategies to help you sleep better at night.

- Watch how much caffeine you take in. Caffeine stays in the body for 10-12 hours. Consider limiting coffee, tea, soda, chocolate, and energy drinks, and setting a cut-off point during the day (such as lunchtime) to stop drinking or eating caffeine.
- Set a routine. Set regular times for going to bed and waking up, even if you slept poorly the night before. Set up a relaxing routine 1-2 hours before bed where you do something calming and limit your exposure to electronics and light. Getting into a routine will train your body to prepare for sleep near bedtime.
- Keep the bedroom mellow. Only use your bed for sleep and sexual activity. This helps your body link the bed with sleep, rather than other things that keep you awake. Keep your bedroom dark and cool and move your clock to prevent you from constantly checking it through the night.



8. **Simple goals and small steps.** Break goals down into small steps and give yourself credit for each step you finish.