

## Pregnant or New Moms may...

- Cry a lot
- Feel sad or hopeless
- Feel overwhelmed by the simplest of tasks
- Feel anxious and/or panicky
- Have difficulty sleeping
- Have extreme fatigue or exhaustion
- Have changes in appetite
- Have poor concentration
- Feel like a “bad mother”
- Have thoughts of harming herself or her baby

## These may be signs of a Perinatal Mood Disorder

She is **not** alone, it can happen to **anyone**.

It is **not** her fault.

There is **help**.

**Family and Friends can be a vital part of her recovery.**

## Perinatal Mood or Anxiety Disorders include:

**Anxiety** – May have frequent worries about many things and may experience difficulty sleeping, muscle tension, and fatigue. Women may also experience panic, obsessions, or compulsions.

**Depression** - May experience a depression that does not go away after a short time. It can occur any time during pregnancy and up to the first year after giving birth to, or adopting a baby.

**Bipolar Disorder** – May experience mood swings, between highs and lows. Unlike depression symptoms, “mania” would be described as high energy, a need for less sleep, racing thoughts, and inappropriate or agitated behaviour.

**Baby Blues**- About 80% of new mothers get the blues. They may feel sad, overwhelmed, and tired for a couple of weeks after giving birth. The blues don't last very long and usually go away on their own.

**Postpartum Psychosis** – This is a rare illness that affects 1-2 in 1000 women and is an emergency situation. Women with postpartum psychosis lose touch with reality. Their mood often changes quickly between very high and very low.

## It can happen to anyone.

Up to 20% of women experience a mood or anxiety disorder during pregnancy or after having a baby.

## She won't always feel this way.

Feelings of shame, guilt and fear of being labeled mentally ill prevent many women from talking to their family or health care professional.

Lack of awareness or knowledge about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders causes many people to deny the seriousness of what they are experiencing.

The causes are not fully known.

Hormonal, biochemical, and psychological changes can affect a woman's mood.

Personal or family history of depression or mental illness increases the risk of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.

Isolation, lack of support, and stress can affect a woman's mental health.

Previous experiences of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse may be a factor.

## How you can help...

- Give your support. Ask how you can help. Suggestions may include: providing meals, doing laundry, and housework. Encourage her to eat nourishing food.
- Learn about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.
- Listen and allow her to openly express her feelings.
- Encourage her to rest during the day when the baby sleeps.
- Encourage her to visit a health care professional. Offer to go with her for added support.
- Encourage her to take time for herself.
- Encourage her to exercise or go for a walk.
- Be supportive. Avoid criticizing or judging. **It isn't her fault.**
- Accept and validate her feelings. Avoid statements like "snap out of it" or "You should be happy to have this baby, etc."

## There is help.

**Mother Reach**  
519-672-HOPE (4673)

**Health Care Professional**  
(family doctor, midwife, nurse practitioner, public health nurse)

**London Mental Health Crisis Service**  
519-433-2023

**Local Hospital Emergency Department**

[www.helpformom.ca](http://www.helpformom.ca)

[www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net)

[www.womensmentalhealth.org](http://www.womensmentalhealth.org)

[www.postpartum.org](http://www.postpartum.org)

[www.motherisk.org](http://www.motherisk.org)

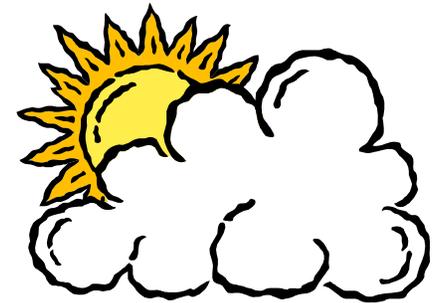
Created June 2012

**Middlesex-London Health Unit**  
50 King St., London ON N6A 5L7  
tel: (519) 663-5317 • fax: (519) 663-9581  
health@mlhu.on.ca

Strathroy Office - Kenwick Mall  
51 Front St. E., Strathroy ON N7G 1Y5  
tel: 519-245-3230 • fax: (519) 245-4772

# The Pregnancy and Baby Blues

*A guide for friends and family*



**Perinatal Mood & Anxiety  
Disorders**

[www.healthunit.com](http://www.healthunit.com)