

Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: <https://reachmd.com/programs/advances-in-womens-health/recognize-signs-postpartum-depression-anxiety/56564/>

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Recognizing the Signs of Postpartum Depression and Anxiety

Announcer:

This is *Advances in Women's Health* on ReachMD. Today, we'll learn about the signs and symptoms of postpartum depression and anxiety from Dr. Alison Reminick. She's an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the UC San Diego School of Medicine, and the Former Founder and Director of the Women's Reproductive Mental Health Program at UC San Diego Health. Let's hear from her now.

Dr. Reminick:

Postpartum depression is going to look like a depressive episode that typically comes on in the third trimester or any time after postpartum—up until 12 months postpartum, they can be diagnosed.

And so we look for somebody who is looking depressed, meaning they look kind of flat, withdrawn, and not socially engaged. It's really difficult for them to feel attached or engaged with their partner or their baby. They can struggle with sleeping too much or too little. They can also have difficulties with their appetite, so either having higher or lower appetite or eating too much or too little. And so weight fluctuations—weight gain or weight loss—can be a symptom of postpartum depression. They can complain of poor concentration. They can complain of just feeling slowed down, both cognitively and physically, or feeling weighed down, like they're leaden.

Also, the thing that we worry about the most is having any suicidal thoughts, feeling like life is not worth living, or feeling hopeless. So when someone doesn't seem like they're talking much about the future, or there are huge red flags like talking about life insurance policies, or talking about the future without them in it, those are huge flags that we look for in terms of thinking of postpartum depression.

Also included in that is anhedonia, which is a symptom of postpartum depression. So that's just complete loss of interest in doing activities that they usually enjoy doing.

I think a lot of patients and providers alike struggle to identify postpartum anxiety, especially with the first child, because a lot of patients think, maybe this is what life is like now that I have this little being outside of my body that I'm solely responsible for in terms of their health and their upbringing. And so I think anxiety is tolerated as a norm. But I really talk to my patients about if anxiety is making their world smaller. That is problematic, if it's taking up a lot of time in their head and they're not able to enjoy aspects of motherhood. We don't expect people to enjoy every aspect, but is it interfering with their daily functioning and their ability to enjoy their life?

I have a lot of patients that get so anxious about leaving the house with their baby, because they get so anxious about, what if the baby cries? What if the baby needs to feed? What if people see the baby crying? They really limit themselves, because they're so anxious and flooded with these thoughts about all these what-if scenarios. They tend to not leave the house, and their world is much smaller. They worry about their naps. They worry about the baby's safety. And so there's a lot of things that then dictate what they can and cannot do, just based on these unrealistic expectations and anxieties.

Announcer:

That was Dr. Alison Reminick talking about how to recognize postpartum depression and anxiety. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit *Advances in Women's Health* on ReachMD.com, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!