



Mental Health Red Flags Checklist & Resources

Print this checklist and keep it somewhere accessible. Share it with your partner or support person so they know what to watch for too.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

FOR YOURSELF:

- Check this list weekly during your first few months postpartum
- Be honest about what you're experiencing
- Don't wait for symptoms to get worse before seeking help
- Remember: Having these symptoms doesn't make you a bad parent

FOR PARTNERS/FAMILY:

- Watch for these signs in your loved one
- Don't ignore concerning behaviors hoping they'll improve on their own
- Offer to help make appointments or accompany them to get help
- Take threats of self-harm or harm to baby seriously

It's always better to seek help and not need it than to need help and not seek it. Trust your instincts - if something feels wrong, it's worth discussing. You don't need to meet all criteria to deserve support.

Early intervention leads to better outcomes.



Emergency Mental Health Resources

When you need help right now—immediate support for mental health crises

EMERGENCY

Call 911 Immediately

If you are experiencing ANY of these:

- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- Plans to hurt yourself or your baby
- Hearing voices telling you to harm yourself or your baby
- Believing your baby is evil or needs to be "saved" through harm
- Feeling like harming your baby is logical or necessary
- Severe confusion about what's real
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't there)
- Complete inability to care for yourself or your baby
- Feeling like you might act on thoughts of harm

URGENT

Contact Healthcare Provider Today

If you are experiencing ANY of these:

- Haven't slept in 24+ hours despite having opportunities
- Persistent thoughts about harming your baby (that distress you)
- Feeling completely overwhelmed and unable to cope
- Severe mood swings with bizarre behavior
- Panic attacks that feel uncontrollable
- Unable to eat or keep food down for several days
- Feeling disconnected from reality
- Extreme paranoia or suspicion
- Feeling like you're "going crazy"
- Substance use to cope with emotions

IMPORTANT

Call healthcare provider this week if you are experiencing any of these:

DEPRESSION SIGNS

- Persistent sadness lasting 2+ weeks
- Loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Significant changes in appetite (eating much more or less)
- Sleeping too much or unable to sleep even when baby sleeps
- Extreme fatigue that doesn't improve with rest
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Feeling hopeless about the future
- Crying frequently or inability to cry when you want to

ANXIETY SIGNS

- Constant worry that interferes with daily life
- Racing thoughts you can't control
- Physical symptoms: rapid heartbeat, sweating, dizziness
- Avoiding normal activities due to fear
- Excessive checking (constantly checking if baby is breathing)
- Fear of being alone with your baby
- Intrusive, scary thoughts about harm coming to baby
- Feeling "on edge" or easily startled constantly

RAGE / ANGER SIGNS

- Explosive anger that feels out of control
- Frequent urges to scream, hit, or throw things
- Anger that seems disproportionate to the situation
- Feeling like your "fuse" is extremely short
- Saying or doing things in anger that you regret
- Feeling constantly irritated or "on edge"

BONDING CONCERNS

- No feelings of connection to your baby after several weeks
- Feeling like you're just going through the motions of care
- No protective feelings toward your baby
- Feeling relieved when others care for your baby
- Persistent feelings of resentment toward your baby

WORTH DISCUSSING

Mention at next appointment if you are experiencing any of these:

- Occasional intrusive thoughts that you can dismiss
- Feeling more anxious or sad than usual, but still functioning
- Taking longer to bond with baby than expected
- Feeling overwhelmed but managing daily tasks
- Mood swings that feel more intense than normal
- Worrying more than usual about baby's safety
- Feeling like you're not enjoying parenthood as much as expected
- Occasional angry outbursts that concern you
- Difficulty adjusting to your new role as a parent
- Feeling isolated or disconnected from others

24/7 Emergency Resources

When you need help right now—immediate support for mental health crises

Crisis Support:

911 (immediate danger) [US]

988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) [US]

Your **local emergency room**

Call immediately if:

- You have a plan to hurt yourself or your baby
- You are actively trying to harm yourself or your baby
- You feel you cannot keep yourself or your baby safe

What to say: *"I'm having a mental health emergency and I need immediate help. I am [pregnant/postpartum] and having thoughts of harming myself/my baby."*

24/7 Helplines:

- Postpartum Support International
1-800-944-4773
- National Maternal Mental Health Hotline
1-833-9-HELP4MOMS [US]
- Crisis Text Line
Text **HOME** to **741741 [US]**
- Find crisis support worldwide
Findahelpline.com

Professional Support:

- Your OB-GYN or primary care provider
- Your baby's pediatrician (they can also provide mental health referrals)
- Local mental health crisis services

Perinatal Mental Health Provider Directory - psidirectory.com

REMEMBER:

Crisis hotlines are free and available 24/7
You don't need to be "sick enough" to call for help
Crisis workers are trained in perinatal mental health
Calling for help doesn't mean your baby will be taken away
Getting help early prevents crises from getting worse

Sterling Parents