Discover a new day.

All moms deserve to enjoy their lives and their children. You can find help and support. Call your health care provider or the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Helpline at 1-800-862-1889 (all calls are confidential). Take the first step toward feeling better.

Nebraska Perinatal Depression Project

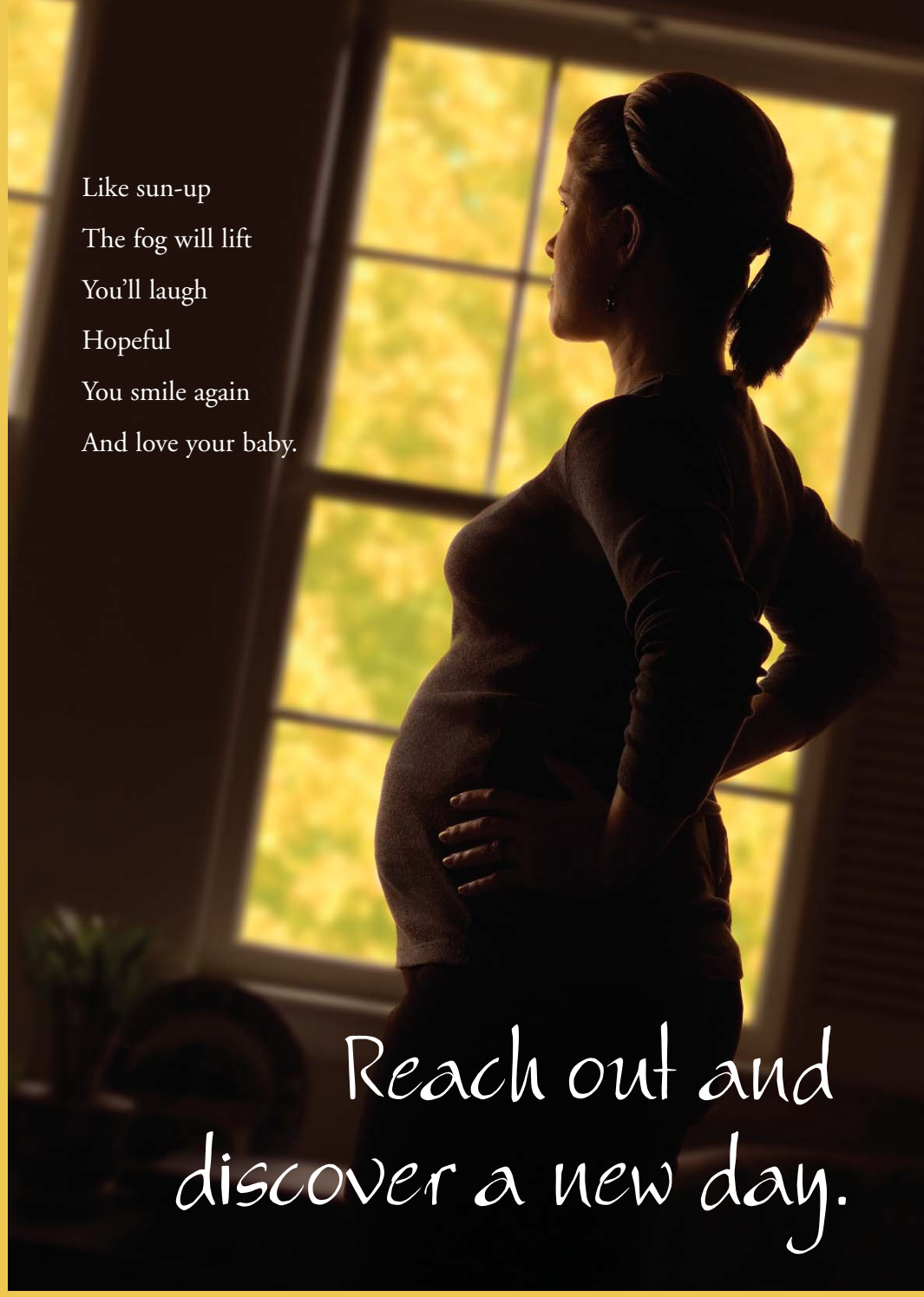
1-800-862-1889 | www.dhhs.ne.gov/MomsReachOut

Additional Resources

www.Postpartum.net
www.WomensHealth.gov
www.MarchofDimes.com
www.PostpartumStress.com

Department of Health & Human Services
DHHS
NEBRASKA

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services EOE/ADA



A Guide to Understanding Pregnancy-Related Depression

It can happen to anyone.

Pregnancy for many women is a time of great joy. Motherhood has its own challenges, and when depression occurs during or following pregnancy, it can be difficult for a woman and her family.

Pregnancy-related depression is not anyone's fault. By reaching out for help, you can overcome depression and enjoy your life once again.

You can feel better.

Most of us feel sad, blue, unhappy, or down in the dumps sometimes. Clinical depression, though, is a medical condition that occurs when feelings of sadness, loss, anger, or frustration interfere with everyday life.

Some people describe it as a continuous feeling of hopelessness. Others say it's like a dark cloud that surrounds them and separates them from others. Some women say they have fatigue that makes even the smallest task seem overwhelming and impossible.

Pregnancy-related depression can happen during pregnancy or within a year after delivering a baby. The good news is that depression can be treated—you can be happy again.

"I really think it's my responsibility to tell other women that depression is real, it can happen, and you can get help. Your life can be happy and really good...I'm just so grateful."

— Mary

Look for these signs.

Symptoms of pregnancy-related depression may include:

- ☐ Feeling restless and irritable
- ☐ Feeling sad, hopeless, or overwhelmed
- ☐ Crying a lot
- ☐ Having no energy or motivation
- ☐ Eating too little or too much
- ☐ Sleeping too little or too much
- ☐ Trouble focusing, remembering, and making decisions
- ☐ Feeling worthless or guilty
- ☐ Decreased interest or pleasure in activities
- ☐ Withdrawal from friends and family
- ☐ Loss of interest in bathing, fixing hair, and getting dressed
- ☐ Having headaches, chest pains, or a racing heart

After pregnancy, signs of depression may also include being afraid of hurting your baby or yourself, or not having any interest in your baby.

Seek help from your health care provider if any of these symptoms last for more than two weeks.

Talk to someone.

If you have some symptoms, don't panic. Remember, depression is treatable and it can happen to anyone. It does not mean you are a bad mother.

Some women don't tell anyone about their symptoms because they feel embarrassed, ashamed, or guilty. They worry that they will be viewed as an unfit parent. But to get well, you must seek help.

Talk to your health care provider and let him or her know how you are feeling. Most likely, one or both of these treatments will be recommended:

- ***Talk therapy.***
  This involves talking to a therapist, psychologist, or social worker to learn to change how depression makes you think, feel, and act.
- ***Medicine.***
  Your health care provider can give you antidepressant medication. Many medicines are available and some work very quickly. Taking medicine for depression is just like taking medicine for other illnesses. Don't feel ashamed because you need it.

  Some pregnant women are concerned that taking medicine may harm the baby. A mother's depression can also affect her baby's development, so getting treatment is important for both mother and baby. The risks of taking medicine have to be weighed against the risks of depression. That's why it is important for you to discuss the decision with your health care provider.

Did you know?

One woman out of 10 experiences depression during pregnancy.

One woman out of 8 experiences depression after the birth of a baby.

Try strategies that have helped others.

You're not alone. Here are some proven strategies for dealing with the challenges of motherhood:

Sleep when you can.
Resist the temptation to do housework when the baby is sleeping. Develop the habit of napping when the baby naps. You'll probably look forward to it!

Get as much help as you can.
If people offer a meal or to babysit, say yes! Sometimes it's hard to ask for help because you feel you should be able to do everything yourself. But, it's okay to ask for assistance with housework and caring for your baby.

Talk about how you feel.
Tell your husband or your partner, your family, and your friends. It will help them understand what you're going through and help you know that many people are on your side.

Make a plan every day.
Get dressed. Shower and comb your hair. Have a healthy snack. Go for a short walk. Visit a friend. Run an errand. Play with your baby. Rest between tasks if you need to, but don't sit at home alone.

Spend time with your husband or partner.
Get a babysitter and go on a date. Or plan time alone together. You needed this before the baby and you need it now too.

Talk to other mothers.
There's nothing like experienced mothers to teach you to lower your expectations of yourself. They know that your house will not be perfect. They know that you're struggling. They know how much energy a pregnancy, giving birth, and a new baby take. They know housework shortcuts and where to get the cheapest diapers. You can learn from their experiences.

Join a support group.
Ask your health care provider or your friends for a recommendation. Call the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Helpline at 1-800-862-1889 or look in the phone book for a mothers group. Churches and civic organizations are also good resources. Having other people in your life who understand what you're going through will encourage you.

"I know I was in denial. Even though I knew depression could happen, I didn't think it would happen to me. I'm so glad my family saw it and stepped in."

— Nicole