


Perinatal Mood & Anxiety Disorders

These illnesses affect **1 IN 5** women during pregnancy or the first year postpartum. 

 They are caused by changes in biology, psychology, hormones and environment.



The Path to Wellness is some combination of...



Self-Care

Being a new parent, caring for a newborn, juggling responsibilities, maintaining home and family are challenging, especially if mom feels anxious or depressed.

SLEEP

Getting 4-5 hours of uninterrupted sleep is the most effective, least expensive thing a new parent can do to start feeling better. Brainstorm with partner, friends, and family how to maximize sleep. **Note:** Sleeping too much or not being able to sleep when baby sleeps may be signs of more serious depression or anxiety.

EAT

New moms should eat every time baby eats. Water and a high-protein snack (yogurt, cheese stick, nuts) are good mini-meals. Family and friends can stock a feeding station for mom and baby.

EXERCISE

Gentle exercise – such as a walk around the block – can have great benefits. The combined effect of change of scenery, fresh air, Vitamin D from the sun, and endorphins released in the body can have a positive impact on mood.

TIME-OFF

No other job is so demanding, requiring being on duty 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. New parents need time off to recharge and rejuvenate, especially if feeling overwhelmed. The challenge is to identify and meet those needs, whether it's taking a shower, reading, or connecting with friends.

✿ New parents must care for themselves so they can care for others.



Social Support

New moms often feel the need to connect with other new mothers, especially if experiencing anxiety or depression. Peer support groups offer non-judgmental listening, support, and encouragement from others experiencing similar issues. Leaders of these support groups are caring, empathic, and have survived these illnesses.

Social support can also be practical support: providing meals, babysitting, driving older children, running errands, doing laundry, tidying the house. All of these can help diminish the pressure a new parent feels.

✿ Postpartum Support Virginia volunteers provide **FREE one-on-one text and phone support via our warm line and lead FREE peer support groups throughout Virginia.**



Talk Therapy

New parents may be challenged by their role as a parent, changes in relationships, and communications with partner. Talking with an objective third party – often short-term therapy with a social worker, psychologist, or professional counselor – can help significantly.

✿ Postpartum Support Virginia has a **list of mental health professionals who specialize in treating new or expectant parents experiencing PMADs.**



Medication

Sometimes medication is needed to lessen anxiety or depression. Several medications commonly used to treat anxiety or depression are widely considered safe to use during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. These medications can be prescribed by primary care physicians, obstetrician/gynecologists, or psychiatrists and psychiatric nurse practitioners (WHNP-C).

✿ Postpartum Support Virginia has a **list of psychiatrists/WHNP-Cs who specialize medication management for pregnant or breastfeeding mothers experiencing PMADs.**