

Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) are common, treatable, and can occur at any time during pregnancy or in the first year after pregnancy (the perinatal period).

What are the symptoms of PMADs?

- PMADs are a spectrum of emotional distress that includes depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, bipolar affective disorder, PTSD, and rarely psychosis.
- Symptoms can include feelings of hopelessness, guilt, despair, feeling inadequate as a parent, anxiety, irritability, lack of interest in things once enjoyed, intrusive or unwanted thoughts such as obsessing over the baby's safety, and feeling emotionally numb or disconnected from baby.

What is the Impact of PMADs?

- As many as one in five pregnant or postpartum Vermonters suffer from symptoms of depression and/or anxiety during the perinatal period. Early data suggests this number is now significantly higher at 1 in 3 women experiencing symptoms, most likely due to the pandemic.
- These disorders are one of the leading complications related to childbearing and can have profound and lasting impacts on the entire family.
- PMADs touch most Vermont families in some way. There is emerging evidence that fathers, partners, and non-gestational caregivers (foster or adoptive parents) are also at risk from the stress of having a baby.
- It can be hard to recognize or identify these disorders at a time when many people experience changes in mood, sleep patterns, and appetite which can lead to under-diagnosis and under-treatment of PMADs.
- A recent peer reviewed study estimated cost of untreated PMADs in the U.S. is \$14.2 billion for all births in 2017 following the mother-child pair from pregnancy through 5 years postpartum.

What are the risk factors for PMADs?

- Some people are at higher risk due to factors including their life experiences, genetics, and brain biochemistry.
- Stressors associated with low socio-economic status significantly increase a person's likelihood of developing symptoms.
- Due to the American history of structural racism, members of the Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) community are disproportionately impacted by perinatal mental health conditions, experiencing them at rates 2-3 times higher than white individuals.

Where can people get help?

-  **Help Me Grow Vermont** offers [referrals](#) for therapy and support. Dial 2-1-1 ext. 6
- [Crisis Text Line](#) text VT to 741741
- [Designated Mental Health Agencies](#)
- [Postpartum Support International Vermont Chapter](#)

