



## The baby blues

By Douglas Eames, Ph.D. & Doug Berger, M.D., Ph.D. | [ASK THE EXPERT](#)



### QUESTION:

*A good friend of mine delivered her first baby, a girl, four weeks ago. I have visited with her several times since the delivery and have noticed that she seems less active than I was after the births of my two sons. She also does not seem like the cheerful person she was prior to the birth. I have heard about the baby blues and postpartum depression and am wondering if she should just give this phase a little more time to pass, or should I suggest she get some help?*

This is only a limited amount of information, but low energy levels and a low mood state for a period of four weeks after the birth is concerning and she should be evaluated by a mental health care provider/physician.

The Maternity Blues (or Baby Blues) following the delivery is one consideration, but as her condition has continued for a month, it is too long to only be the Maternity Blues. The Maternity Blues is defined to be a mild and transitory mood state that occurs in about 80 per cent of women following delivery, lasts up to several days, and generally does not require treatment.

Another possibility is that her low activity levels might be a postpartum exhaustion (or postpartum fatigue). Postpartum exhaustion is thought to be related to hormone changes and the physical stress of pregnancy. This exhaustion may in some cases be caused by anemia, infections or inflammation, or thyroid problems, which can be assessed by laboratory tests along with a doctor's evaluation. It is very important to identify and treat postpartum exhaustion if present, as it is a risk factor for postpartum depression.

Postpartum depression is thought to occur in 5 to 9 per cent of women in the first few months after childbirth, but can also occur after a miscarriage. The symptoms may be very similar to the symptoms of a major depression, and is probably caused by changes in brain chemistry that accompany the hormonal and other physiologic changes of pregnancy. Hormonal treatment, vitamins, or dietary supplements are usually not effective alone, and treatment with counseling, psychotherapy and anti-depressant medication is usually necessary for improvement.

Postpartum depression may or may not go away without treatment, but considering the responsibility and tasks your friend now has in caring for her newborn, it makes sense for her to

consult with a mental health care provider.

*Douglas Eames, Ph.D.,*

*Doug Berger, M.D., Ph.D*

*Drs. Eames and Berger of the Meguro Counseling Center in the Shibuya-Ebisu area provide mental health care for individuals, couples, and families, in both English and Japanese.*

[www.megurocounseling.com](http://www.megurocounseling.com)

Digg

---

---

TOKYO  
families [tokyofamilies.com](http://tokyofamilies.com)