



# ARC Mental Health Information Series

*This document is intended to be information only and does not replace the opinion of a health provider.*

## D-MER Dysphoric Milk Ejection Reflex

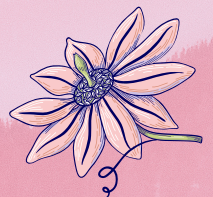
D-MER is a physiological phenomenon that an estimated 9% of breastfeeding mom's experience. It is a physical, bodily reaction to the hormones and mechanisms of breastfeeding and not something that the breastfeeding parent is making up. D-MER is thought to happen as a result of the drop in dopamine that happens when your milk lets down.



### Symptoms

- Sadness
- Depression
- A sense of doom
- Agitation
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Panic
- Dizziness
- Restlessness

D-MER specifically happens when your milk lets down. These negative emotions will then sweep over you within a few seconds of letting down and then can last for a few minutes and no more than 10 minutes. D-MER will often resolve in days or weeks and if it persists longer than that, it will disappear once you stop nursing. D-MER should not be confused with postpartum depression or anxiety, but may occur at the same time as these conditions.





There are three intensities of D-MER – mild, moderate and severe. These intensities are determined by the breastfeeding person's interpretation of intensity, how long the D-MER takes to self-correct, how many letdowns per feeding they feel dysphoric and other criteria. Mild often self-corrects in the first 3 months, moderate by month 9 and severe sometimes does not correct until after the first year or later. Those with more severe D-MER may need a prescription in order to manage D-MER if weaning is considered as a result of the symptoms.

## Coping mechanisms

- Identify and acknowledge D-MER as happening to you and not as your fault
- Deep breathing and positive visualization
- Meditation and mindfulness techniques
- Practicing skin-to-skin time with your baby in between breastfeeding sessions
- Making sure your overall stress levels are in check
- Spending extra time on self-care (staying hydrated, eating nutritious meals with adequate protein, getting enough rest)
- Placing a warm pack on your shoulders or soaking your feet in warm water
- Distract your mind by listening to relaxing music or reading a book while breastfeeding
- Talking about your experience with another parent who has experienced D-MER or a lactation specialist who is experienced in it.

Track your symptoms in a log, so that you can pinpoint things that may exacerbate D-MER, like dehydration, too much caffeine, stress or even not exercising for a few days.

## Resources available

MAM Marraine autour de la maternite: Breastfeeding support  
2060 Holmes st. Saint-Hubert QC J4T 1R8  
Telephone: (450) 904-1458, website: [www.mam.qc.ca](http://www.mam.qc.ca)

Sadness When Breastfeeding - [D-MER.org](http://D-MER.org)

Psychosocial support available at CLSC and through your primary care physician

CLSC St-Hubert - (450) 443-7400

CLSC Brossard - (450) 445-4452

CLSC St-Jean-sur-Richelieu - (450) 358-2572

CLSC Richelieu (450) 658-7561

811 Info-Sante, press 9 for English



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