Maternal Health Risks after Delivery

If you have been pregnant within the last year, speak up if you are experiencing ANY of the following:

- Headache that won’t go away or gets worse over time
- Dizziness or fainting
- Vision changes
- Fever of 100.4° F or higher
- Extreme swelling of hands or face
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- Trouble breathing
- Chest pain or rapid heartbeat
- Severe nausea and vomiting
- Severe belly pain that doesn’t go away
- Severe swelling or redness or pain in leg or arm
- Heavier than expected vaginal bleeding or discharge
- Overwhelming tiredness

Help is available. Talk to your doctor or nurse today!

SAFETY FIRST FOR STAFF

Maternal Risks After Delivery

What lingering health risks are associated with delivery?
Serious pregnancy-related complications can occur days, weeks, or months after delivery and can be life threatening. Conditions include: (CDC)

- Hemorrhage
- Blood clots
- Severe infection or sepsis
- Cardiac and hypertensive disorders
- Serious depression or self-harm
- Exposure to violence

What are some warning signs of serious postbirth complications?
These symptoms may indicate a life-threatening condition, and medical care should be sought immediately. For example: (CDC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severe headache that won’t go away or gets worse over time</th>
<th>Trouble breathing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dizziness or fainting</td>
<td>Chest pain or rapid heartbeat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thoughts about harming oneself or the baby</td>
<td>Severe nausea and vomiting (not like morning sickness)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changes in vision</td>
<td>Severe belly pain that doesn’t go away</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fever of 100.4°F or higher</td>
<td>Heavy vaginal bleeding or leaking fluid that smells bad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extreme swelling of the hands or face</td>
<td>Swelling, redness, or pain in the leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overwhelming tiredness</td>
<td>Unexplained injuries</td>
</tr>
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</table>

What can be done to reduce the risk of postbirth complications?

- Be alert for signs of potential complications and to immediately report concerns to a provider.
- Educate patients about postbirth complications during both prenatal and postpartum encounters.
How can you support efforts to ensure patients feel safe to speak up about signs of postbirth health symptoms?

— Proactively ask about symptoms.
— Promote a culture that values the perspectives of all patients.
— Listen carefully and respectfully, talk to your patient about their symptoms.
— Look for cues that your patient may be suffering from signs of a postbirth health issue (e.g., body language, “red flag” language).
— Offer support—help your patient feel seen and heard.
— Communicate the patient’s concerns and symptoms to the medical provider.

For more information, see the guidance article “Obstetric Liability” https://www.ecri.org/components/HRC/Pages/ObNeo1.aspx.

To learn how to access more membership content like this, contact us at HealthSystemRM@ecri.org.

Sources:
