

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!

Source: Urgent maternal warning signs. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HEAR HER Campaign. November 17, 2022. Accessed June 6, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/hearher/maternal-warning-signs/index.html>



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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)

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

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:

You know your body best. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Hear Her Campaign. Accessed June 10, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/hearher/docs/pdf/CDC-Hear-Her-Womens-urgent-warning-signs-h.pdf>

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