POSTPARTUM CARE: THE "FOURTH TRIMESTER"

Your Health, Recovery, and Healing Matter

WHY YOUR CHECKUPS ARE IMPORTANT

The weeks following childbirth or the end of a pregnancy are called the fourth trimester. This is a vital time for your body and mind to heal. Many of the discomforts and changes women have in the weeks after giving birth are normal. However, some can be warning signs or symptoms of serious medical problems that need treatment. Seeing your provider can help spot these signs and symptoms and may help prevent serious medical problems.

WHEN TO SEE A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

Postpartum care is an ongoing process. New moms are encouraged to:

- Have contact with your health care provider within 3 weeks of giving birth
- Get ongoing medical care throughout the postpartum period, as needed
- Have a complete and full medical checkup no later than 12 weeks after giving birth

Note: *If you had pregnancy complications or have chronic health conditions, you may need earlier and more frequent postpartum checkups. Check with your provider.*

CARE AFTER A PREGNANCY LOSS

If you have experienced a miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant loss, medical care is still very important. Your body goes through the same physical recovery and hormonal changes, and your emotional health needs gentle support. A follow-up visit allows your provider to check your physical healing, support you through grief or depression, and answer questions.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT A POSTPARTUM VISIT

Physical Exam: Checking incision or tear recovery, blood pressure, pelvic health, and managing physical pain.

Mental Health and Safety: Routine screening for depression, anxiety, and extreme fatigue to ensure your safety and emotional well-being at home.

Future Health: Discussing family planning, birth control options, and managing long-term health conditions.



WHEN TO GET MEDICAL HELP RIGHT AWAY

Know the warning signs of post-birth problems. Seek emergency care immediately if you experience any of these symptoms:

- Severe headache or changes in vision
- Heavy bleeding (soaking through a pad an hour) or bad-smelling discharge
- Chest pain, severe swelling, or trouble breathing
- Fever of 100.4°F or higher

This fact sheet is for educational purposes and is not intended to replace the advice of your healthcare provider. Always follow the specific care plan and instructions given to you by your healthcare provider.