

Postpartum conversation guide for parents



Giving birth can be amazing, but it can also be stressful. Sometimes things in your life beyond your control—like where you live or access to quality healthcare—can make things even harder. This can bring on a lot of emotions, especially when taking care of a new baby.

But don't worry, you're not alone! This guide has the information you need to speak up for yourself and your baby, making sure you both get the best possible start.



Important facts

Your body undergoes changes when you have a baby, and it needs time to recover. In the weeks after giving birth, you might have common discomforts like belly cramps, soreness, or feeling tired—these are normal as your body heals. Occasionally, those who give birth may encounter postpartum complications that can

lead to serious health problems. If you ever feel pain or discomfort that doesn't feel normal, get in touch with your doctor. In case of an emergency or if you feel your life is in danger, call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately.

Warning signs and red flags

You might wonder, "Is it normal or could it be something else?" When you're busy looking after your new baby, it's easy to miss the signs that something could be wrong. Here are five things you need to keep an eye on:



Chest pain: This could feel like a heavy weight is sitting on your chest, tightness, or squeezing. It can be mild, dull, or sharp.



Vision changes: Having blurry vision, seeing flashing lights or spots, or being sensitive to light could be a sign of preeclampsia.



Heavy bleeding: Some bleeding is normal, but a flow that's heavier than your period or is getting worse isn't.



Mood changes: Having a baby brings lots of big feelings and some changes in your mood are normal. Strong feelings of sadness and worry, or feeling anxious, angry, or hopeless most days are signs of a serious mental health condition.



Trouble breathing: Coughing, having trouble catching your breath, or gasping for air (like when you've run too fast) should never be ignored.

Other warning signs that you need to pay close attention to include **fever, clammy skin, chills, and dizziness**. Even if you have just one of these symptoms, get medical care right away.

What to do for yourself

Focus on overall wellness. It's normal to "want your body back" after giving birth. This will take time, so stick to good habits that will support your health in the long term instead.

Ask for the support you need. Taking care of a baby is a lot to think about. Ask friends and family for help. Tell them exactly what they can do for you, like going grocery shopping or making meals.

Move your body. Do some form of physical activity that you enjoy. Start off small and add more as you go along each week.

Maintain good nutrition. Eating nutritious foods will help support the new changes in your body. If you don't eat certain foods, talk to your provider to make sure you're including options that will help you get the nutrients you need.

Advocate for yourself. You know your body best. If you didn't have a good experience with your healthcare provider or team during pregnancy or feel like you're not being heard, it's OK to look for a new provider for your postpartum care. Be sure to request your medical records to bring to your new care team.

Conversation starters

Talking about your struggles or asking for help can be difficult, but it's important—and OK—to lean on others who care about you during this time. Their support will help you better care for yourself and for your baby.

These conversation starters can help you get the support you need from family and friends:

"I'm starting to feel overwhelmed/tired/in need of a break. Can you help me by..."

...dropping off dinner tonight? It's hard to find the time to cook while taking care of the baby and myself."

...running to the store for me? I have a list of things I need to get but I really need to rest today."

...taking care of the older children for the day? They need to get out and play. Or if you can watch the baby, it would be great for me to get fresh air and spend time with them."

"Something feels off in my body..."

"I've been having a difficult time, can we talk about becoming a mom?"

"This is hard to talk about, but I need help. I'm feeling really stressed since we got home from the hospital and feel like I'm not doing a good job."

"I need a listening ear. Would you be able to listen to me while I talk?"

Resources

For more postpartum resources, please visit marchofdimes.org/postpartum

Postpartum Support International HelpLine Available in English or Spanish by calling 1-800-944-4773 or by texting 800-944-4773 (English) or 971-203-7773 (Spanish).

National Maternal Mental Health Hotline Call or text 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262). Available 24/7