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**Information for Patients After Giving Birth
During the COVID-19 Pandemic
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Congratulations on the birth of your baby! During the postpartum period, it's important to take care of both your mental and physical health.

Mental Health

After you give birth, you may feel tired and a little overwhelmed by the huge task of caring for your baby. Your hormone levels have also gone through some major changes. For a few days or weeks, you may have the "baby blues" which can include feelings of sadness, mood swings, anger, anxiety and low self-esteem. The baby blues are very common and will pass in time. Your doctor can suggest some ways to help you feel better.

Less common is maternal depression. The symptoms of maternal depression can be severe. They can include feelings of hopelessness, high anxiety, eating problems, feeling "out of control," and thoughts of harming yourself or your baby. Maternal depression is not a sign of weakness. It's not something you can just "snap out of," but it can be treated. Call your doctor or midwife if you think you have maternal depression. **If you have thoughts of harming yourself or others, there are crisis counselors available to speak to 24/7. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text GOT5 to 741-741. If you need immediate assistance, call 911.**

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is especially stressful for many people. People with mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms.

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your health and the health of your loved ones;
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns;
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating;
- Depressed mood;
- Panic attacks;
- Irritability;
- Conflicts with partners/family members;
- Obsessive thoughts or worries;
- Worsening of chronic health problems;
- Worsening of mental health conditions; and
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

A few things you can do to stay mentally healthy include:

- Eating healthy;
- Getting outside and taking a walk while practicing social distancing;
- Staying connected with your friends and family over the phone or online;
- Taking breaks from news and social media; and
- Telling your health care provider if you are feeling sad or anxious.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the New York State Office of Mental Health has set up an **Emotional Support Helpline: 1-844-863-9314 7 days a week, 8am – 10pm**. The Emotional Support Helpline provides free and confidential support, helping callers experiencing increased anxiety due to the coronavirus emergency. The Helpline is staffed by volunteers, including mental health professionals, who have received training in crisis counseling.

If you have thoughts of harming yourself or others, there are crisis counselors available to speak to 24/7. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text GOT5 to 741-741. If you need immediate assistance, call 911. If you call 911, ensure you say that you recently had a baby and/or if you are COVID-19 positive.

Postpartum support and resources are available through the Postpartum Resource Center of NY. Call 1-855-631-0001 or visit their website at: <https://postpartumny.org/>.

Additional mental health resources are available on the CDC website, here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>.

Physical Health

Most people who give birth recover without physical problems. But any person can have complications after the birth of a baby. Learning to recognize post-birth warning signs and knowing what to do can save your life. Below are some warning signs to be aware of:

Call your healthcare provider if you have:

- Bleeding, soaking through one pad/hour or blood clots the size of an egg or bigger;
- Incision that is not healing;
- Red or swollen leg that is painful or warm to the touch;
- Temperature of 100.4 degrees F or higher; or
- Headache that does not get better, even after taking medicine, or bad headache with vision changes.

Call 911 or go to the emergency room if you have:

- Pain or pressure in your chest;
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath; or
- Seizures.

If you call 911 or go to the emergency room, ensure your provider knows that you recently had a baby and/or if you are COVID-19 positive or suspected COVID -19 positive.

Trust your instincts! Always get medical care if you are not feeling well or you are getting worse or have questions or concerns.

Health Services and Resources

Family planning and reproductive healthcare services are available to provide free or low-cost birth control methods to prevent pregnancy, and health screenings for breast and cervical cancer and other referrals. For a family planning program near you go to: https://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/family_planning/

Local **community health workers** and **home visitors** are available to provide you with health information, connect you with healthcare and supportive services, and provide parenting support.

For a community health worker program near you go to: https://www.health.ny.gov/community/adults/women/maternal_and_infant_comm_health_collaboratives.htm

For a home visiting program near you go to: https://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/home_visiting_programs/pregnant_parenting_fam.htm

Or call the **Growing up Healthy Hotline 1-800-522-5006** to be connected to maternal and infant health services near you including healthcare, nutrition, pregnancy, family planning, home visitors, children's special needs, and more.

Physical health information used with Permission from the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses. For access to online education and patient handouts visit www.AWHONN.org.

Information adapted from:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>;
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>; and
- <https://awhonn.org/education/hospital-products/post-birth-warning-signs-education-program/>.