



PREPARING FOR BIRTH & DELIVERY

In an effort to stop the spread of the coronavirus, many hospitals are limiting the number of visitors mothers can have in their delivery room and NICU unit. You and your support person(s) will likely be screened for symptoms upon arrival at the hospital. Be sure that your support person is healthy, as they may be turned away if symptoms are present.

Regardless of visitor limits, you and your support person(s) should be treated with dignity and respect throughout the labor and delivery process. Discrimination is not allowed and support person(s) should be

given equal treatment even if they are not family members.

Birth plans can help you outline your wishes for labor and delivery. Plans can include how you want to manage pain, where you want to give birth, or breastfeeding plans. You may want to consider how the current public health emergency may affect your birth plan and adjust in advance. Maybe your planned support person(s) is not able to attend or your breastfeeding plans change. Speak with your healthcare provider about how to best adjust your birth plan if needed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Every labor & delivery and NICU unit is different so consider asking your provider, hospital, or birth center the following questions to prepare for what to expect:

- How many visitors are allowed in the room when I deliver?
- Are there any exceptions to the visitor limits for other essential people?
- Will my doula be allowed at my birth and not included in the visitor limit?
- Can my other children visit me in the labor and delivery unit?
- Is there anything I should bring or be aware of before coming to the hospital?
- What if I am positive or suspected to be positive of COVID-19?
- Will my hospital stay be shortened due to COVID-19?
- Will my baby stay with me at all times?
- If my baby is admitted to the NICU will I be able to visit them?
- Will my birth or breastfeeding plans change as a result of COVID-19?



IF YOU PLAN TO DELIVER AT HOME

If you are planning to deliver at home, be sure that you are assisted by a skilled provider. Consider the following:

- Home births are only recommended for low-risk and healthy pregnancies
- Work with a trained, skilled midwife
- Explore if home birth is covered by your insurance company
- Have an emergency plan in place

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Giving Birth during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [March of Dimes Statement on Delivery Support Persons](#)
- [March of Dimes COVID-19 Birth Plan](#)
- [Find a Midwife](#)
- [Birth Plan Templates and Examples](#)
- [Home Birth Benefits and Tips](#)



POSTPARTUM SUPPORT

The time after delivery is a vital period for you and your baby.

Postpartum follow up and communication with your healthcare provider is still important. You should attend your first postpartum check-up within the first three weeks after giving birth. Postpartum care is meant to meet any physical or mental health needs you may have and ensure you are healthy. You can also ask your provider if postpartum care can be done through [telehealth](#).

If you have to go to the emergency room for any reason, please let the staff know you recently gave birth and inform them of any medical conditions you may have or any complications that occurred during your pregnancy or while giving the birth.

Speak with your healthcare provider about concerns you may experience after giving birth. Know when to call 911, when to call your provider, and be aware of the following [POST-BIRTH warning signs](#) (next page).

SAVE YOUR LIFE:

Get Care for These POST-BIRTH Warning Signs

Most women who give birth recover without problems. **But any woman can have complications after the birth of a baby.** Learning to recognize these POST-BIRTH warning signs and knowing what to do can save your life.



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|--|--|
| <p>Call 911 if you have:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Pain in chest <input type="checkbox"/> Obststructed breathing or shortness of breath <input type="checkbox"/> Seizures <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughts of hurting yourself or your baby |
| <p>Call your healthcare provider if you have:</p> <p>(If you can't reach your healthcare provider, call 911 or go to an emergency room)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Bleeding, soaking through one pad/hour, or blood clots, the size of an egg or bigger <input type="checkbox"/> Incision that is not healing <input type="checkbox"/> Red or swollen leg, that is painful or warm to touch <input type="checkbox"/> Temperature of 100.4°F or higher <input type="checkbox"/> Headache that does not get better, even after taking medicine, or bad headache with vision changes |



Tell 911 or your healthcare provider:

"I had a baby on _____ and
(Date)
I am having _____."
(Specific warning signs)

These post-birth warning signs can become life-threatening if you don't receive medical care right away because:

- **Pain in chest, obstructed breathing or shortness of breath** (trouble catching your breath) may mean you have a blood clot in your lung or a heart problem
- **Seizures** may mean you have a condition called eclampsia
- **Thoughts or feelings of wanting to hurt yourself or your baby** may mean you have postpartum depression
- **Bleeding (heavy)**, soaking more than one pad in an hour or passing an egg-sized clot or bigger may mean you have an obstetric hemorrhage
- **Incision that is not healing, increased redness or any pus** from episiotomy or C-section site may mean you have an infection
- **Redness, swelling, warmth, or pain** in the calf area of your leg may mean you have a blood clot
- **Temperature of 100.4°F or higher, bad smelling vaginal blood or discharge** may mean you have an infection
- **Headache (very painful), vision changes, or pain in the upper right area of your belly** may mean you have high blood pressure or post birth preeclampsia

**GET
HELP**

My Healthcare Provider/Clinic: _____ Phone Number: _____
Hospital Closest To Me: _____



This program is supported by funding from Merck, through Merck for Mothers, the company's 10-year, \$500 million initiative to help create a world where no woman dies giving life. Merck for Mothers is known as MSD for Mothers outside the United States and Canada.

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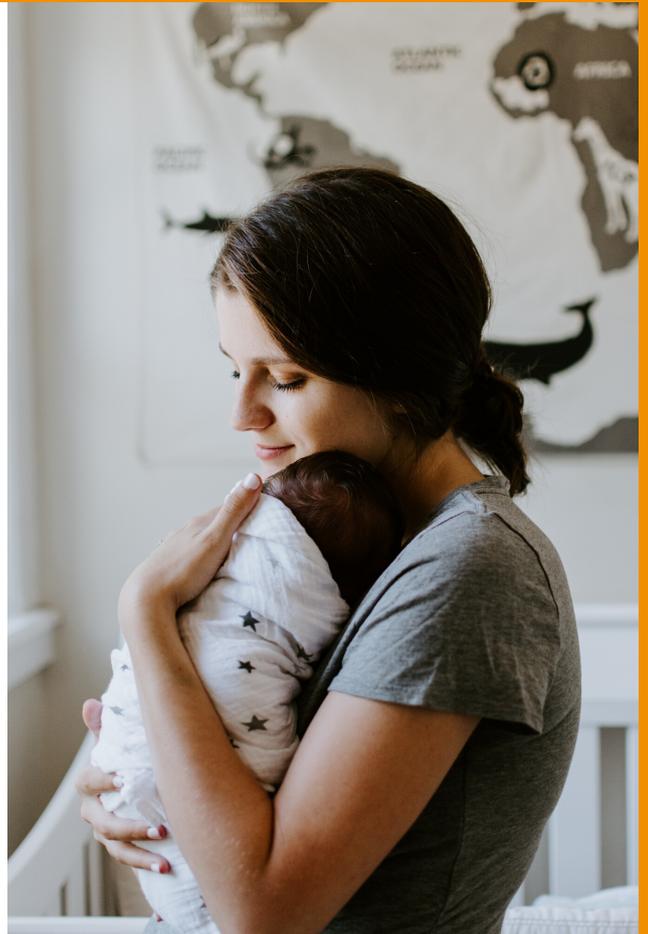
POSTPARTUM MENTAL HEALTH

While many new mothers go through mood changes during and after pregnancy, it is not uncommon to experience depression and anxiety symptoms. These symptoms are called perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADS), and affect about 1 in 5 mothers.

Symptoms may include:

- Inability to sleep
- Panic attacks
- Not being able to leave your baby
- Not being able to take care of daily needs

Proper care and support can help with symptoms and recovery. You can find maternal mental health professionals who may provide teletherapy, telemedicine, and online support services [here](#).



HANDLING ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

You may be experiencing increased anxiety during this time. Social distancing might leave you feeling isolated and being uncertain of the future may cause worry. Think about the following tips to improve your mental health through the COVID-19 crisis:

- Contact loved ones by phone, chat or online
- Walk outside if possible
- Find ways to meditate or relax whenever possible
- Limit exposure to the news
- Connect with maternal mental health support groups
- Call the PSI HelpLine at 1-800-944-4773(4PPD)
- Send a text message to the Helpline: 503-894-9453 (English) (Mandar texto en español al 971-420-0294)
- [Find Online Support Groups](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [AWHONN POST-BIRTH Warning Signs](#)
- [ACOG Optimal Postpartum Care](#)
- [4th Trimester Project – Postpartum Guide](#)
- [PMAD Symptoms & Support](#)
- [PSIGA Virtual Support Resources](#)
- [COVID-19 Outbreak: Flattening the \(Anxiety\) Curve](#)



INFANT HEALTH

As anxieties rise over the COVID-19 pandemic, it is natural for moms to feel worried about the health of their child. To protect infants and children, the [CDC recommends](#) the following:

- Wash hands often
- Sanitize commonly used surfaces
- Avoid people who are sick
- Wash and sanitize toys
- Stay home if possible

You should also clean commonly used baby items such as changing tables, wipe boxes, car seats, crib railings, diaper bags, and pacifiers. You can clean with soap and water and/or a household disinfectant. The [CDC also has household cleaning guidelines](#) where you can find

recommended disinfectants and how to best clean different types of surfaces.

To keep infants protected from COVID-19, the CDC recommends mothers thoroughly wash their hands before touching their infant. Based on what is known about COVID-19, the [CDC has set out temporary guidelines for breastfeeding](#), mothers (this guidance is subject to change). It is recommended that mothers:

- Wash hands before touching infant
- Consult their healthcare providers on breastfeeding guidance
- Wear a face mask while feeding
- If they are sick or suspected of being sick
- If using a breast pump, thoroughly [clean the pump](#)
- If possible, have someone who is healthy feed the infant

NEWBORN SAFETY

General newborn safety guidance should also be followed during this time.

- Safe sleep: follow the ABC method when putting your infant to bed. Babies should sleep:
 - Alone
 - On their **Back**
 - In a Crib or bassinet
- Car seats: review this car seat safety guide for installment instruction and proper seat information
- Vaccinations: It is recommended that infants still receive their scheduled vaccinations during this time.



NEWBORN SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Newborn support programs are still available during COVID-19. The Georgia Home Visiting Program is using phone and video calls to continue services. Babies Can't Wait, an early intervention program for families of babies with developmental delays and disabilities, is providing services through similar methods.

Keep in mind that it is possible for your baby to be sent home with a loved one depending on your health and recovery. Ensure that they have access to these resources and information so that they are best prepared for caring for your baby before you return home.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Tips for Coping with a New Baby during COVID-19
- Voices – Resources for Parents with Children at Home
- Georgia Home Visiting Program (available via phone and video)
- Babies Can't Wait Early Intervention Program
- Helping Mamas - Baby Supplies (metro ATL)



Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Georgia (HMHBGA) would like to recognize the following partner organizations for their contributions to this toolkit. Their expertise, time, and dedication to ensuring families are connected to the resources they need during the COVID-19 crisis furthers our mission of improving maternal and infant health through advocacy, education, and access to vital resources.

- A Better Balance
- Atlanta Birth Project
- Bellies to Babies Foundation
- Center for Black Women’s Wellness
- Center for Reproductive Rights
- Emory University
- Feminist Women’s Health Center
- Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students
- Georgia OBGyn Society
- Georgians for a Healthy Future
- Majaica, LLC
- March of Dimes Georgia
- Morehouse School of Medicine
- Nurse-Midwives of Georgia
- SisterSong
- Twin Mommy, LLC
- Voices for Georgia’s Children



The Atlanta Birth Project

