

For moms: Your postpartum checkup

Even if your baby's still in the newborn intensive care unit (also called NICU), go see your health care provider for a postpartum checkup. This is a medical checkup you get after you have a baby to make sure you're recovering well from labor and birth. Go to your postpartum checkup, even if you're feeling fine.

What happens at your postpartum checkup?

- **You get a pelvic exam.** Your provider checks your vagina (birth canal), uterus (womb) and cervix. The cervix is the opening to the uterus that sits at the top of the vagina. If you had an episiotomy or a tear during birth, your provider checks to see that it's healed. An episiotomy is a cut made at the opening of the vagina to help let the baby out. Your provider can tell you when it's safe to have sex again.
- **You and your provider talk about birth control.** If you didn't talk about birth control with your provider before you had your baby, talk about it at your postpartum visit. Talk to your provider about birth control options and how they fit with your plans about having more children. Ask about using an IUD or implant to help keep you from getting pregnant again too soon.
- **You can ask your provider questions about problems you had during pregnancy, labor and birth.** This is the time to talk about how you may be able to prevent problems in future pregnancies, even if you're not thinking about having another baby now. For example, if you had a premature birth, gestational diabetes, gestational hypertension (high blood pressure) or a condition called preeclampsia, you may be at increased risk of cardiovascular disease (also called heart disease) later in life. Heart disease affects the heart and blood vessels and can lead to serious problems, like heart attack or stroke. It's also a leading cause of pregnancy-related fact death.
- **You can share your feelings about being a new mom.** It's normal to feel tired and stressed quit in the weeks after birth. Tell your provider if you have feelings of sadness or worry that last for a long time and make it hard to care for your baby. Your provider can check you for postpartum depression and give you treatment to help you feel better. Your provider checks on health conditions you have, like depression, diabetes and high blood pressure. If you have these kinds of conditions, get treatment.
- **You get a physical exam.** Your provider checks your blood pressure, weight, breasts and belly. If you had a cesarean birth (also called a c-section), your provider may want to see you sooner, about 2 weeks after you give birth, so she can check your c-section incision (cut).
- **Your provider makes sure your vaccinations are up to date, especially for flu and pertussis (whooping cough).** By getting vaccinated, you can help keep from getting sick and passing an illness to your baby.

How can your postpartum checkup help you reduce your risk for premature birth in your next pregnancy?

At your postpartum checkup, talk to your provider about problems you had during pregnancy, like premature birth. Having a premature birth makes you more likely to give birth early again in another pregnancy. Ask about how you can reduce your risk for premature birth in your next pregnancy.

No one knows for sure what causes premature birth. But there are some things that may make you more likely than other women to give birth early. These are called risk factors. Some risk factors are things you can't change, like having a premature birth in the past. But other risk factors may be things you can do something about, like quitting smoking and getting treatment for health conditions that may affect pregnancy.

Even if you have one or more risk factors for premature birth, it doesn't mean for sure that your next baby will be born early. But reducing your risk factors may help you stay pregnant longer next time.

Use the chart on the next page to see if you have risk factors for premature birth or other problems in future pregnancies. Share the chart with your provider to see what you can do to reduce your risk.

Notes _____

Risk factors for premature birth or other problems in future pregnancies

Use this chart to see if you're at risk for premature birth or other problems in future pregnancies. Go over it with your provider to see what you can do to help reduce your risk.

| Risk factor | Do you have this risk factor? | What you can do |
|---|--|--|
| Having premature birth in a past pregnancy | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | Talk to your provider about progesterone treatment. Progesterone is a hormone that can help reduce the risk for premature birth in certain women. There are two kinds of treatment: vaginal progesterone and progesterone shots. Each is used to treat different conditions. Ask your provider if either treatment is right for you. |
| Getting pregnant too soon after having a baby | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | Wait at least 18 months between giving birth and getting pregnant again. Talk to your provider about getting an IUD or implant or using other kinds of birth control. |
| Having a short cervix | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | Talk to your provider about vaginal progesterone and cerclage. If you have a short cervix, these treatments may help reduce your chances of giving birth early. |
| Having certain health conditions, like depression, diabetes or high blood pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | Get treatment for any health conditions you have. If you're at risk for preeclampsia (a kind of high blood pressure) in your next pregnancy, talk to your provider about taking low-dose aspirin to help prevent it. Tell your provider about any medicine you take. If you take a prescription opioid to treat pain (if you've been injured or had surgery), don't stop taking it until you talk to your provider. Take any prescription medicine exactly as your provider tells you to. Don't take more than your provider says you can take, don't take it with alcohol or other drugs, and don't use someone else's prescription medicine. |
| Smoking, drinking alcohol or using harmful drugs | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | Quit. Ask your provider about treatments and quit programs in your area. Tell your provider if you use heroin (an illegal opioid), if you mix it with prescription opioids or if you use any other street drugs. |
| Being overweight or underweight | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | Get to a healthy weight before you get pregnant. Talk to your provider about the weight that's right for you. Eat healthy foods and do something active every day. |
| Having certain infections that can cause problems during pregnancy | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure | Protect yourself from infections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your vaccinations (like the flu shot) are up to date. • Have safe sex to protect yourself from sexually transmitted diseases. • Don't eat raw or undercooked food. • Wash your hands well with soap and water after using the bathroom or blowing your nose. • Call your provider if you feel burning when you go to the bathroom. |