

Self-Advocacy & Navigating the Healthcare System

Take Charge of Your Postpartum Journey

Empowering, Informing, and Supporting Black Moms Through Evidence-Based Care

Postpartum Care & Wellness for Black Mothers

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This brochure is for informational and educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you have concerns about your health, postpartum recovery, breastfeeding, or mental well-being, consult a qualified healthcare provider. In case of urgent medical concerns or emergencies, seek immediate medical attention by calling 911 or visiting your nearest hospital.

Helpful Resources for Black Mothers and Their Families

♥ Postpartum Support International, PSI
<https://www.postpartum.net/>

♥ Durham Public Health durham.ca

♥ Postpartum Travel Nurses: www.ptns.ca

♥ Directory of Black perinatal care professionals: minocare.com

♥ Black Health Professionals Network
www.bhpn.com

(care may be covered under private insurance benefit plans)



Tips for Healthcare Appointments:

- Be direct about your symptoms & concerns
- Ask questions & request second opinions if necessary
- Bring a support person (partner, friend, doula, family)
- Know your rights – You have the right to quality, respectful care

You deserve quality postpartum care.

Questions to Ask Your Health Care Provider:

- "Can you explain why I'm experiencing this?"
- "What are all my options for treatment?"
- "Are there any side effects or risks I should be aware of?"
- "Can I get a second opinion?"

Why is postpartum care important?

This period is a **time of healing, adjustment, and emotional transformation**. Black mothers face unique challenges in the healthcare system, making education and self-advocacy essential.

- Postpartum depression affects many women, but studies show that women of color are more susceptible and less likely to receive treatment. [1]
- Black women are twice as likely to experience perinatal mental health challenges but are half as likely to receive treatment. [2]
- Black pregnant individuals are at a higher risk for maternal complications, including hypertension and hemorrhage.

Recognizing Postpartum Health Risks

Signs to follow up immediately with healthcare provider:

- Severe headaches
- Vision changes
- Heavy vaginal bleeding
- Dizziness
- Extreme fatigue (feeling extremely tired although you have rested)
- Leg swelling
- Chest pain and/or shortness of breath
- Feeling overwhelmed or excessive worrying,
- Feelings of disconnection from baby

* Breastfeeding benefits FOR Black parents and babies

Benefits to the BABIES [3]

- Breast milk provides optimal nutrition, immune protection, and regulation of growth and development
- Fosters a favourable gut microbiome, reducing asthma and obesity rates
- Appropriate jaw, teeth, and speech development

Benefits to the MOTHERS [3]

- Reduces maternal bleeding after delivery
- Involute uterus
- Facilitate positive metabolic changes
- Facilitate postpartum weight loss
- Reduce stress
- Delay Ovulation



Building a Strong Postpartum Support System

Who Can Support You?

- Partner, family, and friends – Set clear boundaries and ask for help.
- Lactation consultants, home care nurses & doulas – Specialized support for breastfeeding & postpartum care.
- Online & local support groups – Safe spaces for Black mothers to share experiences.

Know This:

- You don't have to "do it all" alone.
- Seeking help is not a weakness – it's a strength.
- Your health & well-being matter just as much as your baby's.

"It takes a village" isn't just a saying... support is key for recovery and well-being.

Strive to:

- Not let providers dismiss your concerns. Speak up if something feels wrong.
- Track symptoms and seek medical attention for any warning signs.
- Bring an advocate (partner, friend, doula) to medical visits for support.

[1] Sandoku, A. (2020). Postpartum depression in women of color: 'more work needs to be done'. *Medical News Today*. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/postpartum-depression-in-women-of-color-more-work-needs-to-be-done#2>

[2] Health Canada. (2023). Government of Canada announces close to \$857,000 to support maternal mental health on world maternal mental health day. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/news/2023/05/government-of-canada-announces-close-to-857000-to-support-maternal-mental-health-on-world-maternal-mental-health-day.html>

[3] Jones, A. (2023). Breastfeeding benefits black parents and babies. *Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department*. <https://tpchd.org/blog/breastfeeding-benefits-black-parents-and-babies/>