

# Optimizing Postpartum Care

Committee Opinion **i** | Number 736 | May 2018

## Presidential Task Force on Redefining the Postpartum Visit Committee on Obstetric Practice

**ABSTRACT:** The weeks following birth are a critical period for a woman and her infant, setting the stage for long-term health and well-being.

To optimize the health of women and infants, postpartum care should become an ongoing process, rather than a single encounter, with services and support tailored to each woman's individual needs. It is recommended that all women have contact with their obstetrician–gynecologists or other obstetric care providers within the first 3 weeks postpartum. This initial assessment should be followed up with ongoing care as needed, concluding with a comprehensive postpartum visit no later than 12 weeks after birth. The comprehensive postpartum visit should include a full assessment of physical, social, and psychological well-being, including the following domains: mood and emotional well-being; infant care and feeding; sexuality, contraception, and birth spacing; sleep and fatigue; physical recovery from birth; chronic disease management; and health maintenance. Women with chronic medical conditions such as hypertensive disorders, obesity, diabetes, thyroid disorders, renal disease, and mood disorders should be counseled regarding the importance of timely follow-up with their obstetrician–gynecologists or primary care providers for ongoing coordination of care.

During the postpartum period, the woman and her obstetrician–gynecologist or other obstetric care provider should identify the health care provider who will assume primary responsibility for her ongoing care in her primary medical home. Optimizing care and support for postpartum families will require policy changes. Changes in the scope of postpartum care should be facilitated by reimbursement policies that support postpartum care as an ongoing process, rather than an isolated visit. Obstetrician–gynecologists and other obstetric care providers should be in the forefront of policy efforts to enable all women to recover from birth and nurture their infants.

This Committee Opinion has been revised to reinforce the importance of the “**fourth trimester**” and to propose a new paradigm for postpartum care.

<https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2018/05/optimizing-postpartum-care>