

WHO urges quality care for women and newborns in critical first weeks after childbirth



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The World Health Organization (WHO) launched its first ever global guidelines to support women and newborns in the postnatal period – the first 6 weeks after birth. This is a critical time for ensuring newborn and maternal survival and for supporting healthy development of the baby as well as the mother’s overall mental and physical recovery and well-being.

Worldwide, more than 3 in every 10 women and babies do not currently receive postnatal care in the first days after birth – the period when most maternal and infant deaths occur. Meanwhile the physical and emotional consequences of childbirth – from injuries to recurring pain and trauma – can be debilitating if unmanaged but are often highly treatable when the right care is given at the right time.

In addition to addressing immediate health concerns, these first weeks after birth are crucial for building relationships and establishing behaviours that affect long-term infant development and health. The guidelines include recommendations for breastfeeding counselling – to aid attachment and positioning as breastfeeding is established – and to support parents in providing responsive care for their newborns.

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