

Importance of Postnatal Care

Importance of Postnatal Care (PNC)

Key concepts, why it matters, and what effective care looks like

1. Definition & Scope

Term	Meaning
Postnatal period	The first 6 weeks (42 days) after birth, when the mother's body returns to its non-pregnant state and the newborn adapts to life outside the womb.
Postnatal care (PNC)	A set of health promotion, preventive, and curative services for mother and baby, delivered at home, in a health facility, or through community outreach.
Continuum of care	Integration of antenatal, intrapartum, and postnatal services so that no gap exists between pregnancy and early childhood.

2. Why PNC Is Critical

Maternal Benefits	Neonatal/Infant Benefits
Hemorrhage control – Early detection of postpartum bleeding saves lives.	Thermal regulation – Immediate skin-to-skin and breastfeeding prevent hypothermia.
Infection prevention – Monitoring for endometritis, wound infection, urinary tract infection.	Early detection of danger signs – Jaundice, respiratory distress, sepsis.
Psychological health – Screening for postpartum depression, anxiety, and providing counseling.	Nutritional support – Initiation of exclusive breastfeeding, vitamin K, immunizations.
Family planning – Counseling and provision of contraceptives to space pregnancies.	Growth monitoring – Weight, length, head circumference measurements.
Chronic disease management – Blood pressure, diabetes, anemia follow-up.	Developmental surveillance – Milestones, sensory screening.
• Global impact: Roughly 1 million maternal deaths and 2.5 million neonatal deaths occur each year; most are preventable with timely PNC.	

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- **Equity:** Women and babies in low-resource settings, rural areas, or marginalized groups have the highest risk of missing PNC.
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3. Core Components of Quality PNC

1. Immediate (within 24h) assessment

- Vital signs, uterine tone, lochia, perineal wound, breast assessment.
- Newborn: APGAR review, breathing, skin color, cord care, first feed.

2. First week follow-up (Day 3–7)

- Mother: Check for infection, anemia, pain, mental health.
- Baby: Weight check, feeding adequacy, jaundice screening, vaccination (e.g., BCG, HepB).

3. Six-week visit

- Comprehensive physical exam for mother (uterine involution, pelvic floor, contraception).
- Infant: Full growth chart, developmental milestones, immunization schedule update.

4. Health education & counseling

- Breastfeeding techniques, danger signs, nutrition, hygiene, family planning, mental health resources.

5. Community linkage

- Home visit programs, peer support groups, referral pathways for complications.
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4. Recommended Timing & Frequency (WHO guideline)

Visit	Timing	Main Focus
Visit 1	Within 24h of birth (ideally within 2h)	Stabilize mother & baby, initiate breastfeeding, assess for immediate complications.

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Visit	Timing	Main Focus
Visit? 2	Day?3 (± 2 ?days)	Check wound healing, anemia, breastfeeding, newborn weight & jaundice.
Visit? 3	Day?7–14	Continue breastfeeding support,