

Overview of Maternal and Child Health

Overview of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Nursing

Key concepts, roles, and practice areas for nurses caring for women, infants, children, and families.

1. Foundations of MCH Nursing

Element	Description
Definition	A specialty nursing field that promotes the health and well-being of mothers, infants, children, adolescents, and families across the lifespan.
Core Philosophy	Holistic, family-centered, and culturally sensitive care that integrates health promotion, disease prevention, and treatment.
Population Focus	• Pregnant women (pre-conception to postpartum) • Newborns & infants • Children & adolescents • Families and caregivers
Primary Settings	• Community health centers & home-visiting programs • Hospital obstetric, neonatal, and pediatric units • School health services • Public health agencies & NGOs
Key Public Health Goals	• Reduce maternal and infant mortality • Decrease low-birth-weight and preterm births • Improve immunization coverage • Promote healthy growth and development

2. Scope of Practice

1. Health Promotion & Education

- Antenatal counseling (nutrition, exercise, substance avoidance)
- Breastfeeding support & lactation education
- Parenting skills, safe sleep, injury prevention

Overview of Maternal and Child Health

2. Screening & Assessment

Nursing

- Prenatal risk assessment (medical, psychosocial, environmental)
- Growth & developmental monitoring (weight, length, milestones)
- Mental health screening (postpartum depression, anxiety, child behavior)

3. Clinical Care & Intervention

- Management of normal labor, delivery, and immediate postpartum care
- Neonatal resuscitation, thermoregulation, and feeding support
- Administration of vaccinations, growth factor supplements, and prophylactic medications (e.g., vitamin K, erythromycin eye ointment)

4. Care Coordination & Advocacy

- Linking families to social services (housing, food security, Medicaid)
- Facilitating referrals to specialists (e.g., perinatology, genetics, developmental pediatrics)
- Advocating for policies that improve maternal and child health outcomes

5. Research & Quality Improvement

- Collecting and analyzing data on maternal/child outcomes
- Implementing evidence-based protocols (e.g., WHO Safe Motherhood guidelines)
- Participating in community health needs assessments

3. The Maternal Care Continuum

Phase	Primary Nursing Interventions	Expected Outcomes
Pre-conception	• Risk factor identification (chronic disease, medication review) • Folic acid supplementation counseling • Confirmation of dating, early prenatal labs	Optimized health before pregnancy; reduced neural tube defects
First Trimester	• Education on nausea management, lifestyle changes	Accurate gestational age; early detection of complications

Overview of Maternal and Child Health

Phase	Primary Nursing Interventions	Expected Outcomes
Second Trimester	• Anomaly scanning, glucose tolerance test, anemia screening • Teaching fetal movement awareness	Early identification of fetal anomalies; maternal metabolic health
Third Trimester	• Monitoring for pre-eclampsia, fetal growth, labor preparation • Birth plan development	Safe delivery; reduced preterm labor risk
Intrapartum	• Pain management, continuous fetal monitoring, support for natural birth	