



## Ongoing Provider Visits

Postpartum women receive ongoing, personalized provider visits instead of a single postpartum visit to ensure continuous support, proactive monitoring, and timely response to postpartum women's ongoing health needs.

### Benefits:

More than half of pregnancy-related deaths occur in the postpartum period, and more than 80% of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable. Postpartum visits allow providers to address acute issues from pregnancy, childbirth, or the postpartum period, discuss the management of chronic conditions, and engage in preventive care. Ongoing, personalized provider visits offer continuous support and monitoring to address evolving health needs throughout the postpartum period.

*Not enough attention is paid as far as it should be for more appointments to be made available to moms [after giving birth] instead of the one 6 week appointment that is requested for follow-up. Moms need more opportunities for check-ins, especially to get ahead of some health-related issues that moms might not be thinking of or may not even be even aware of... moms need more education about the things that could happen.*

– BLACK WOMAN, WISCONSIN

### Definition:

Postpartum provider visits are medical appointments and check-ups designed to monitor and support the health of the mother after birth. The postpartum period, defined as one year after delivery, is a critical time for recovery as many complications can arise during this phase. However, many women currently do not attend a postpartum visit and others only attend one visit around six weeks postpartum (as we have heard anecdotally), missing out on the ongoing support and care needed throughout the postpartum period.

### Current Landscape and Guidance:

#### Overview

As many as 40% of women do not attend a postpartum visit, with rates varying by insurance, sociodemographic, and clinical factors. Women belonging to marginalized social groups are less likely to attend postpartum visits.

#### Guidance

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends initial provider assessments within the first three weeks of the postpartum period followed by ongoing care and a comprehensive well-woman visit no later than 12 weeks post-delivery.<sup>1</sup> This guidance is endorsed by the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, the American College of Nurse-Midwives, the National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health, the Society for Academic Specialists in General Obstetrics and Gynecology, and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine.

#### Medicaid

State Medicaid programs have flexibility on how they reimburse for maternity care and postpartum visits. Some states bundle postpartum care into an episode of care payment that includes the entire perinatal episode, some states provide bonus payments for meeting quality measures during the postpartum period, and others provide incentive payments for postpartum visits.

#### Private Health Plans

Private insurers are increasingly adopting bundled payment models for pregnancy care where providers receive a single payment covering services throughout pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum care.

Programs range from Cigna's nationwide pregnancy episode-of-care model and Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey's episode-based payments to UnitedHealthcare's shared savings program.

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT:

Attending postpartum visits can reduce health care costs by addressing issues early and avoiding more severe, costly interventions later on.

- For employer-sponsored insurance, 15% of maternal care spending happens postpartum (average \$3,577).
- Severe maternal morbidity (SMM) postpartum readmissions within 30 days of delivery hospitalizations average a charge of \$47,480 per patient.
- For the commercially insured population, post-delivery (30 days after delivery hospitalization discharge) costs for women with SMM average \$10,506 compared to \$3,626 for women without SMM.
- For the Medicaid population, post-delivery costs for women with SMM average \$8,753 compared to \$2,591 for women without SMM.

“Once you have a baby... the support is a little bit more hands-off and they are not as in it...or are on top of it as when you are having a baby. When you are still pregnant, there are more questions, there is more interest in terms of care. But once you have the baby it is just kind of like, okay do your 6 week follow up or whatever, and it is more laid back, less hands on.”

– HISPANIC WOMAN, WEST

## BRIGHT SPOTS:



New York's Medicaid Perinatal Care Standards state that all Medicaid perinatal care providers must provide an initial assessment of the postpartum persons within the first three weeks postpartum either in-person or via telehealth, and provide a comprehensive postpartum visit in-person between four and 12 weeks postpartum.

Illinois Medicaid began covering a second postpartum visit as a standard benefit in 2021. Both fee-for-service and managed care plans cover a postpartum visit within three weeks after childbirth and a comprehensive visit within 4-12 weeks postpartum.

The community midwifery model of postpartum care includes multiple visits (including home visits), typically five to eight visits over the course of six weeks postpartum, and provides continuous, personalized support that addresses women's ongoing health needs.

“Once I gave birth to my daughter, I didn't have any support. I literally had one appointment after I had her and that was 6 weeks after I gave birth to her...After that, I didn't really have any sort of support coming from being pregnant where you have an appointment once a month, every two weeks, and they are constantly checking on your blood pressure, how you are feeling, and ultrasounds. It literally just stopped after I had her.”

– HISPANIC WOMAN, TEXAS