



Health insurance is important for women after childbirth

A mother's health care needs do not stop with childbirth. New mothers experience a range of health conditions—ranging from physical pain to exhaustion to anxiety and depression. In addition, women in the U.S. are more likely to die of pregnancy-related complications in the weeks and months after childbirth than during pregnancy and delivery. For the more than 50,000 women who come close to dying from pregnancy- and childbirth-related causes, there are lifelong health consequences. These burdens disproportionately impact women of color due to profound disparities in rates of maternal mortality and co-morbidities.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends that all women have at least 12 weeks of ongoing support after childbirth. At a postpartum health care visit, a woman's provider may address a range of health conditions, including chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension; mental health status, including postpartum depression; and family planning, including contraception and inter-conception counseling. Identifying and addressing these conditions means healthier moms and babies. Yet, 12.9% of women are uninsured at some point during the postpartum period, and as many as 40% of women do not attend a postpartum visit.

One key factor in helping women get the health care they need after childbirth is access to health insurance. When women have health insurance, they are more likely to get the services they need. Unfortunately, in the United States, not all women have access to health insurance, with low-income women, women of color and immigrant women at greater risk of being uninsured.

Health insurance is important for women after childbirth because it:

1. Covers the services women need after childbirth
2. Makes health care more affordable; and
3. Supports positive health outcomes for women and babies

In Her Own Words

My son came, unexpectedly, three weeks early... It took me 11 weeks to physically heal after my son's birth thanks to a pretty bad tear. I could barely walk for an entire month after having him and was still in a lot of pain for weeks after that. I also had an oversupply of milk which led to painful engorgement for almost four months and it took a while for us to navigate breastfeeding with such an oversupply. Around eight weeks postpartum I was diagnosed with postpartum anxiety/depression as well.

– Hailee (Ohio)

Health insurance covers the services women need after childbirth

Almost all health insurance plans are required to cover a comprehensive set of benefits—known as the essential health benefits—which includes a postpartum health care visit and other services important for women after childbirth. Health insurers are also required to cover many services—including breastfeeding services and supplies—without a copay.

Health insurance makes health care more affordable

Health insurance makes it easier for women to get the services they need by making care more affordable and reducing out-of-pocket costs. Without health insurance, women are more likely to forgo or delay medical services due to cost. And many women without health insurance face difficulty paying their medical bills and pay more out-of-pocket than those with insurance.

Health insurance supports positive health outcomes for women and babies

Postpartum care can improve the health and well-being of women and their infants. During the weeks, months and sometimes years after childbirth, women need ongoing care from trusted providers to address a range of physical, mental and other health needs related to their recovery. Health insurance is important to helping ensure that women can get the care they need to thrive after childbirth – and healthier moms means healthier babies. Additionally, when mothers are healthy, infants experience improved cognitive, behavioral and socioemotional development.

References available upon request.

Our Position

1,000 Days believes that every mother and child in America deserves a healthy first 1,000 days. We support guaranteed access to high-quality, affordable health insurance that offers comprehensive benefits for preconception and prenatal care, maternity services, breastfeeding and postpartum supports, pediatric care and other critical maternal, infant and young child health services.