

The NEW 2023 updates on the POST-BIRTH Warning Signs Save Your Life Handout are based on a 2023 Research Study examining the experiences of women who received the AWHONN discharge education.

AWHONN indicates that patient only needs one sign; some women who experienced complications were waiting for another sign or for the complication to worsen.

AWHONN thanks Kenvue for providing commercial support for multiple translations of the handout.  
Updated copyright year and version number.

# SAVE YOUR LIFE: Get Care for These POST-BIRTH Warning Signs

Most women and postpartum people who give birth recover without problems. **But anyone can have a complication for up to one year after birth.** Learning to recognize these POST-BIRTH warning signs and knowing what to do can save your life.

**Trust your instincts.**  
ALWAYS get medical care if you are not feeling well or have questions or concerns.

<b>Call 911</b> if you have:	<input type="checkbox"/> Pain in chest <input type="checkbox"/> Obstructed breathing or shortness of breath <input type="checkbox"/> Seizures <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else
<b>Call your healthcare provider</b> if you have: (you only need one sign) <small>(If you can't reach your healthcare provider, call 911 or go to an emergency room)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/> Bleeding, soaking through one pad/hour, or blood clots, the size of an egg or bigger <input type="checkbox"/> Incision that is not healing <input type="checkbox"/> Red or swollen leg, that is painful or warm to touch <input type="checkbox"/> Temperature of 100.4°F or higher or <b>96.8°F or lower</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Headache that does not get better, even after taking medicine, or bad headache with vision changes

**Tell 911 or your healthcare provider:**

"I gave birth on \_\_\_\_\_ and I am having \_\_\_\_\_"  
(Date) (Specific warning signs)

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These post-birth warning signs can become life-threatening if you don't receive medical care right away because:

- Pain in chest, obstructed breathing or shortness of breath (trouble catching your breath) may mean you have a blood clot in your lung or a heart problem
- Seizures may mean you have a condition called eclampsia
- Thoughts or feelings of wanting to hurt yourself or someone else may mean you have postpartum depression
- Bleeding (heavy), soaking more than one pad in an hour or passing an egg-sized clot or bigger may mean you have an obstetric hemorrhage
- Incision that is not healing, increased redness or any pus from episiotomy, vaginal tear, or C-section site may mean an infection
- Redness, swelling, warmth, or pain in the calf area of your leg may mean you have a blood clot
- Temperature of 100.4°F or higher or 96.8°F or lower, bad smelling vaginal blood or discharge may mean you have an infection.
- Headache (very painful), vision changes, or pain in the upper right area of your belly may mean you have high blood pressure or post birth preeclampsia

This program is supported by funding from Merck, through Merck for Mothers, the company's 10-year, \$500 million initiative to help create a world where no woman dies giving birth. Merck for Mothers is known as MSD for Mothers outside the United States and Canada.

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Updated throughout the text with inclusive language.  
AWHONN added the sentence at the top to indicate that some complications could happen up to a year after birth, and this handout/magnet/mobile download should be available throughout that year after birth.

Under temperature, AWHONN introduced a lower temperature trigger to detect sepsis, recognizing that not all sepsis cases are accompanied by fever. AWHONN integrated this trigger into PBWS to encourage discussions between patients and their healthcare providers.

New QR code allows patients, their families, and support systems to access a mobile-friendly webpage that can be added to the home screen of their mobile device. This page enables patients and their families to explore frequently asked questions and download the handout in over 20 languages on a phone or tablet.

The incision explanations now include vaginal tear (lacerations).