

FOURTH TRIMESTER NEWS

Weeks 1 to 8 after delivery



Congratulations on the birth of your baby!

The **fourth trimester** is not part of your pregnancy, but rather refers to the first eight weeks after delivery of your baby. We trust that you and your baby/ies are in good health.

What happens to your body?

- You may wee a lot in the first few weeks after delivery. This is to get rid of excess water.
- You will initially have concentrated milk (colostrum) and later on, a good supply of milk for breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is an important protector of the health of the newborn, giving your baby important immune factors and promoting bonding between mother and baby. It is recommended to continue breastfeeding for at least six months.
- Vaginal discharge is normal and the discharge (called lochia) changes from red straight after the birth to yellow-pink and eventually it will be colourless. If you are concerned that the discharge is too much in volume, stays red (bloody), has a bad odour or is associated with pain and fever, it is important that you consult your doctor immediately.
- The uterus contracts and regains its former size in about eight weeks after delivery.
- Any small vaginal tears and stitches you may have had during delivery should heal completely.
- Swelling of your feet and legs should subside.
- Any shortness of breath or back pain that you had during your pregnancy should be better within six weeks after delivery.
- If you breastfeed and do some postnatal exercises, your weight should return to pre-pregnancy normal levels.
- If you had diabetes or pre-eclampsia during pregnancy, you should consult your doctor for a follow-up within the first two weeks after delivery.
- You may have mood swings. Please read more below on postnatal 'blues' and depression.
- Sexual relations may take some time to return to normal. It is recommended that you abstain from sexual intercourse for six weeks after delivery. Discuss this with your sexual partner.

Postnatal visit at six weeks

You need to see your doctor at six weeks after delivery, in order to check that your blood pressure, blood concentration (haemoglobin) and other parameters have returned to normal.

The doctor may also examine you vaginally to determine that the uterus is back (or close) to its normal size and that there are no infections of the birth canal and uterus.

If you have not had a Pap smear in the last two years, it is advisable to get a Pap smear at this visit.



What happens to your baby?

Some babies develop jaundice (yellowing of the skin) in the first few days after birth. Report this to your doctor and further tests will be done to determine whether further treatment is necessary.

Within two weeks of delivery, your baby should gain weight, drink well and sleep for large parts of the day and night.

If you have any concerns about your baby's wellbeing, please consult your doctor.

Immunisations

Directly after birth the baby is given vitamin K, usually a BCG injection (against TB) and, sometimes, a hepatitis B vaccine. Further scheduling of immunisations can be discussed with your doctor at the baby's six-week visit.



Your fourth trimester to-do list

- Continue taking **multivitamins** prescribed by your doctor.
- Discuss **contraception** options with your doctor.
- Do **postnatal exercises** to regain your pre-pregnancy figure and fitness.
- Continue to eat a **well-balanced diet**.
- Keep **important telephone numbers handy**, such as your doctor.
- Most importantly, **enjoy this special time** with your new baby!



'Baby blues'

After having a baby, many women experience mood swings. You may feel happy one minute, and start crying the next. You may feel a little depressed, have difficulty concentrating, lose your appetite or find that you cannot sleep well, even when the baby is asleep. These symptoms often start about three to four days after delivery and may last several days. This is called the **'baby blues'**.

The **'baby blues'** are considered a normal part of early motherhood and usually settle within 10 days after delivery. However, some women have worse or longer-lasting symptoms. This is called **postnatal depression**.

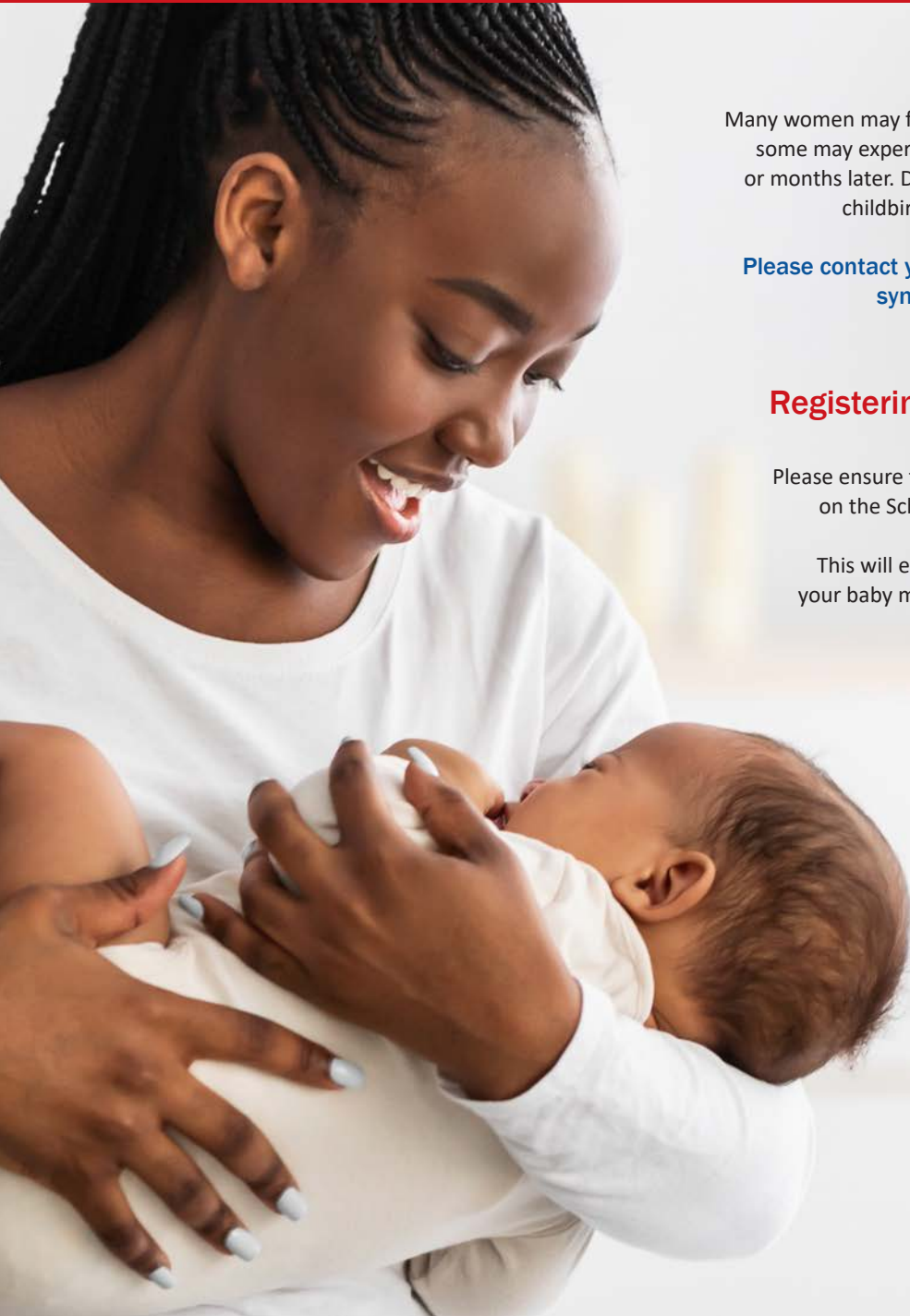
What is postnatal depression?

Postnatal depression is a health condition, like diabetes or heart disease. It can be treated with therapy, support networks and medication, such as anti-depressants.

Here are some of the **symptoms** of **postnatal depression**:

- Loss of interest or pleasure in life
- Loss of appetite
- Less energy and motivation to do things
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Sleeping more than usual
- Increased crying or tearfulness
- Feeling worthless, hopeless or guilty
- Feeling restless, irritable or anxious
- Unexplained weight loss or gain
- Feeling like life is not worth living
- Having thoughts about hurting yourself
- Worrying about hurting your baby.





Many women may feel depressed right after childbirth, however some may experience postnatal depression several weeks or months later. Depression that occurs within six months of childbirth may be postnatal depression.

Please contact your doctor if you experience any of the symptoms mentioned above.

Registering your baby as a dependant

Please ensure that you register your baby as a dependant on the Scheme within 30 days of the birth date.

This will ensure that any medical treatment that your baby may need, will be covered by the Scheme according to its benefits.



If you like the idea of enjoying your antenatal classes and consultations in the comfort of your own home, we invite you to engage with our **Belly Babies online programme**.

By registering on www.bellybabies.co.za, you will have access to expert antenatal and postnatal support in the comfort of your own home through:

- an online antenatal course consisting of a comprehensive collection of videos, presented by various experts within the maternity field;
- an online face-to-face consultation with a highly qualified lactation (breastfeeding) specialist, to help you and your baby establish and maintain a happy breastfeeding routine. You can book your personal consultation through the Belly Babies online platform; and
- a follow-up online face-to-face consultation with a lactation specialist, if needed.

Please note: Your Scheme will cover this from your available positive medical savings account (MSA) balance.



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PG Group Medical Scheme wishes you well on your motherhood journey!

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