

## **Information for Mothers Following the Birth of a Baby Signs and Symptoms of Serious Illness**

Most women recover well from the birth of their baby, but occasionally there may be signs and symptoms of serious illness. Below is a list of signs and symptoms you must not ignore.

### **A very high fever (38 degrees C or over)**

High fever can be a sign of sepsis, which is an infection that's spread from just one part of your body to the whole of your body. This can develop very quickly.

You may also feel shivery and have a fast heart rate and breathing. Depending on where the infection started, you may have other symptoms such as:

- Severe abdominal (tummy) or groin pain, which doesn't get better after you take painkillers.
- Smelly discharge from your vagina.
- Sore and tender breasts.
- Red and painful caesarean-section wound with smelly fluid coming from it.
- Pain when you wee, needing to wee quickly or more often than usual and smelly wee.
- History of sore throat.

### **Severe or persistent headache**

A severe headache after birth could be a symptom of pre-eclampsia especially when accompanied by one or more of the following symptoms:

- Vision problems such as blurring and flashing lights.
- Vomiting.
- Severe heartburn.
- Swollen ankles.

### **Sudden and heavy blood loss, or increasing blood loss, including clots (known as postpartum haemorrhage). Seek help if:**

- The bleeding suddenly increases, and soaks more than one pad an hour.
- You pass lots of large blood clots that are bigger than a 50p piece.
- You start to feel faint or dizzy.
- Your heart starts to race, or your heartbeat becomes irregular.

### **Shortness of breath and/or chest pain**

**If you have chest pain and feel short** of breath then it could be a symptom of pulmonary embolism. Other symptoms include coughing up blood and feeling faint.

### **Calf pain**

If you develop redness and swelling and or pain in your lower leg, usually just in one leg, then it could be a sign of deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Your leg may also look red and swollen and feel

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warm to touch. DVT is a blood clot in the deep veins of your leg. It can be life-threatening if the clot moves and travels through your body to your lung (a pulmonary embolism).

### **Sudden changes to mental health**

In the month after having a baby, some mothers experience a dramatic change in their emotional and mental health. If you have any of the following seek help as soon as possible as this may be the onset of a postpartum mental health issue.

- Hallucinations.
- Delusions.
- Become confused.
- Become depressed.
- Manic behaviour.
- Suicidal thoughts.

Baby blues, Post-natal Depression and Postpartum Psychosis can happen to any woman, whether they've had mental illness before or not. Mild symptoms can develop into serious mental illness within a matter of hours, so it's important that you get treatment as soon as you can.

Click on the link below for further information:

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsanddisorders/postnataldepression.aspx>

**You will require urgent attention if you have any of the above symptoms. Please contact your GP immediately or call for emergency help by dialing 999 and request an ambulance depending on the severity of the problem.**

