

# POSTPARTUM HAEMORRHAGE



**This information tool is for women who have had a postpartum haemorrhage (PPH). This sheet will provide guidance on what to expect following a PPH and the support available.**

## What is a postpartum haemorrhage (PPH)?

All women have some bleeding when their baby is born. Some women bleed more than 500ml (2 cups), which is called a postpartum haemorrhage (PPH).

It is usually hard for doctors and midwives to know before your baby is born if you will have a PPH.

## Why you had a PPH:

The bleeding is often caused by more than one reason.

- Your uterus not contracting well
- Bleeding from the cut (episiotomy) or tear around your vagina (perineum)
- The placenta or a small piece of placenta remaining in the uterus
- Bleeding during caesarean section
- A known or new bleeding disorder

## How often does this happen?

Around 1 in 3 women have heavy bleeding following the birth of their baby. In most cases, blood loss is treated with medicines straight away. You will usually not have ongoing problems.

Severe bleeding (more than 1500mls) is rare. It happens to about 3 in 100 women after birth.

A PPH is more common if you have an assisted birth (vacuum, forceps) or caesarean section. A PPH can also occur up to 6 weeks after the birth. This is called a secondary PPH and affects less than 2 in 100 women.

## How your PPH was managed:

Your care may have included one or more of the following ways:

- Massaging your uterus
- Repairing a perineal tear or episiotomy (cut)
- A urinary catheter put into the bladder
- Medicines to slow bleeding and contract your uterus

- You may have had care in the operating theatre including
  - Removal of the placenta or membranes
  - Bakri (compression) balloon
  - Extra stitches to control bleeding
  - Compression sutures to the uterus
  - Hysterectomy
- Blood transfusion
- Observation and care in the high dependency unit (HDU) or intensive care unit (ICU)

### What you can expect after your PPH:

PPH can affect people in different ways. Many women will not have any problems after a PPH, but for some women:

It can be normal to feel more tired than usual following a PPH, and it may take up to six weeks for you to feel better. Caring for a new baby is very tiring for all women. If your blood count is low, treatment may help some of the tiredness. Your doctor may recommend one or more of the following treatments to increase your blood count: .

- Iron tablets
- Iron infusion
- Blood transfusion

Breastfeeding may take longer to work well after a PPH. If you have any problems breastfeeding, please discuss this with your midwife, lactation consultant, GP or local maternal child health nurse.

Some women and their partners feel distressed during or after a PPH. If you or your partner feel upset, anxious or depressed after you go home, you should get support and help. You may seek support from family and friends, or choose to seek professional help.

### Where you can find help and support:

Mercy@Home postnatal midwives will be in contact with you within 24-48 hours of discharge home. They will follow up care for you and your baby. If you need to contact them, call:

Mercy Hospital for Women: 8458 4466.

Werribee Mercy Hospital: 8754 3458

You may also seek help from the following health professionals.

- Maternal child health nurse
- Your local doctor (GP)
- Your local psychologist or counsellor (via GP referral)

Your doctor may recommend specific follow up detailed below:

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### Further information and support resources

#### Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA)

- 1300 726 306
- [panda.org.au](http://panda.org.au)

#### Beyond Blue

- 1300 224 636
- [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)

#### Centre of Perinatal Excellence (COPE)

- 1300 740 398
- [info@cope.org.au](mailto:info@cope.org.au)

#### Maternal and Child Health Line

- 13 22 29
- 24-hour telephone service



### For more information

If you have any questions or need further advice, please call Maternity Services:

#### **Mercy Hospital for Women**

Ph: (03) 8458 4151

#### **Werribee Mercy Hospital**

Ph: (03) 8754 3390

In the event of an emergency, please dial **000** for an ambulance or go to your nearest Mercy Health or other hospital emergency department.