

A Comprehensive Guide on Maternal and Child Health

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DESCRIPTION

Maternal health refers to a package of comprehensive health care services which are developed to meet promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative needs of pregnant women before, during and after delivery and of infants and pre-school children from birth to five years. Main objectives are as follows.

- Reduces maternal mortality and morbidity.
- Reduce prenatal and neonatal mortality and morbidity.
- Provide basic maternal and child health care to all mother and children.
- Promote and protect health of mothers.
- Promote and protect physical growth and psycho-social development of children.

Maternal healthcare components

It includes antenatal, natal and postnatal care.

Antenatal care: It is the care taken during pregnancy to promote, protect and maintain health of mother during pregnancy, also to ensure the birth of mature and healthy baby, to identify high risk mothers and give them appropriate attention to prevent complication, to prepare the mother for confinement, to prepare the mother to care for her baby. Some of the essential antenatal care services are as follows.

- The mother must be registered within 12 weeks of pregnancy.
- Ideally the mother should attend the antenatal clinic once a month during the first 7 months, twice a month during the second month and thereafter once a week, if everything is normal.
- Taking health history, physical examination, general medical examination, obstetrical examination and laboratory examination.
- First dose of tetanus is given at 16-20 weeks and second dose at 20-24 weeks of pregnancy.
- Mother is given one tablet of iron and folic acid twice a day for at least 100 days to prevent anemia in mother and to promote proper fetus growth.
- A well balanced diet is required during pregnancy for the proper growth and development of fetus and for optimum

health of mother. A pregnant woman should be educated regarding personal hygiene. The mother should be advised to avoid abdominal X-ray as it predisposes child to the risk of leukemia and other cancers.

Natal care: It refers to care during birth of child to prevent infection, injury to both mother and baby, to detect and deal with any complications such as antepartum, prolonged labour, malpresentation, etc., to resuscitate the baby and to provide immediate care to baby. Some of the essential natal care services are as follows.

- Preparation of place and surroundings of confinement.
- Preparation of supplies required during delivery.
- Physical and psychological preparation of mother.
- Examination of mother's physical condition such as abdominal palpation, monitoring fetal heart sound, observation of vital signs, labour pain and uterine extraction, etc.
- Referral of mother immediately in case of any problems.
- Giving immediate care to mother and baby after delivery.
- Maintaining record and reporting of birth to authority.

Postnatal care: It refers to care which is rendered to both mother and the baby after delivery. The following is the immediate care taken for the new born baby.

- Immediately after birth, the baby should cry and breathe. In order to promote breathing, the airway needs to be cleared of mucus and any other secretions.
- The new born are at high risk of hypothermia which can be reduced if the baby is immediately dried with towel, wrapped in a clean cloth and should keep close to the mother for skin to skin contact and breastfed as soon as possible preferably within an hour of birth.
- Wiping of each eye from inside to outside with boiled and cooled swabs before opening of eyes.
- The umbilical cord should be legated in two places, 6 cm and 9 cm from the umbilicus and cut in between and tied with sterilized cord tie to prevent tetanus. The cord should be kept dry.
- Physical examination should be done for the baby in order to identify any birth injury, malformations, etc.

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Immediate care for the mother includes the following.

- The fundus is palpated, clots are expressed and fundal height is measured.
 - The perineum is inspected for any laceration or tear; perineal care is given.
- Mother is made comfortable by removing the soiled linen, thorough cleaning and by keeping her warm, etc.
 - Hot drink is given and the vital signs are recorded.