

PRACTICE STANDARD

Midwives: Postpartum Care

Introduction

The postpartum period is a critical time for the physical, emotional, and social well-being of the newborn and family. The intention of postpartum care is to promote optimal health for the newborn, mother, and family in both the short and long term, and to help prevent issues such as hospital readmissions or adverse outcomes. Typically, midwives offer postpartum care for up to six weeks following birth.

Standards

1. Midwives are expected to provide comprehensive care throughout the postpartum period, including a regular schedule of postpartum visits and 24-hour on call availability. Midwifery care in the postpartum period includes:
 - a. Assessing maternal physical well-being, self-care and overall functioning during the postpartum period, and providing preventive care and advice;
 - b. Assessing the physical well-being and development of the newborn;
 - c. Conducting, collecting and/or referring for standard newborn screening tests in accordance with provincial guidelines, community standards and client choice
 - d. Supporting the initiation and continuation of infant feeding, including interventions, complementary therapies or supplemental feeding as required, to ensure newborn well-being;
 - e. Providing support, information and resources to the family regarding newborn care, growth, development, behaviour, nutrition, feeding and immunizations;
 - f. Detecting complications and disease and arranging appropriate referral when required;
 - g. Assessing mental and emotional well-being, in particular assessing for the occurrence and severity of postpartum depression; and arranging timely and appropriate referral when needed;
 - h. Supporting the family in their sense of competence in parenting and in adopting healthy lifestyles;
 - i. Counseling the family on issues such as nutrition, sexuality in the postpartum period and in the choice and use of contraceptive methods;
 - j. Assessing need for and referral to various community resources.

2. In the immediate postpartum period, the midwife should remain in attendance until maternal and newborn well-being and stability are assured.
3. When coordinating ongoing postpartum visits, the midwife must take into account the clinical situation, antepartum history, intrapartum history, the socioeconomic, cultural, psychological and environmental circumstances, and as such should tailor visits to the needs of the individual family.
4. The midwife establishes a discharge plan with appropriate, community-based health care providers to ensure care is available when needed.
5. The midwife transfers care to another primary care provider if the midwife is unable to complete a full six-week course of postpartum care.
6. At discharge, the midwife provides copies of pertinent records to the client and appropriate primary health care provider.

Revision history

Version #	Approved by board	Bylaw in-force	Description
1.0	March 1, 2026	April 1, 2026	Initial publication

Effective April 1, 2026, this practice standard, and any amendments to it, is made a bylaw under the authority of the *Health Professions and Occupations Act, B.C.*

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