

PUTTING CONTRACEPTION BACK INTO MATERNITY CARE

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There is growing recognition that we have underestimated women's need for effective contraception in the postpartum period. Following delivery both sexual activity and fertility resume quickly. In addition, the requirements for looking after a young baby and recovering from childbirth add to the existing barriers of accessing effective contraception. Unintended pregnancy soon after childbirth is not uncommon and if it leads to a short interpregnancy interval (IPI < 12 months) then this places the pregnancy at higher risk of preterm birth and neonatal death.

There is evidence that women value the option of having effective contraception provided from the maternity service before they are discharged home, yet this is not part of routine maternity care in many parts of the world. There is also evidence that women value contraceptive counselling in the antenatal period from a midwife and that this results in higher demand for the most effective methods of contraception after birth.

Strategies that increase the timely uptake of effective contraception in the post partum period should prevent more unintended pregnancies and reduce short IPI s with better outcomes for women and babies.