



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New educational campaign from The Joint Commission teaches how to advocate for safe care during and after pregnancy

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Illinois, February 16, 2021) – The Joint Commission has released [Speak Up™ for New Parents](#), a new educational campaign that teaches how to advocate for safe care during and after pregnancy. The campaign helps new parents become aware of warning signs and symptoms that may indicate medical help is needed.

As the United States is the only developed country with a rising maternal mortality rate, The Joint Commission is focused on improving maternal health. The *Speak Up™* campaign provides information on how to spot signs of hypertension and preeclampsia, hemorrhage, infection, and depression, as well as tips to address each of these medical issues.

Hypertension and preeclampsia

Before, during and after pregnancy, mothers may have high blood pressure, also called hypertension. It can occur with preeclampsia, a serious condition that can affect the baby and lead to other problems.

- **Warning signs:** Swelling, headaches, pain in lower back or shoulders, pain in upper right side not related to contractions, nausea, sudden weight gain, vision changes or shortness of breath.
- **Tips:** Mothers should never miss a prenatal visit, ensure obstetric (OB) providers check urine for protein, keep a record of blood pressure and count the baby's "kicks."

Hemorrhage

Hemorrhage is severe bleeding during or immediately after birth.

- **Warning signs:** Soaking a pad in less than an hour, developing large, quarter-sized blood clots, dizziness after getting up from a chair or bed, increased heart rate, shortness of breath, weakness and more.
- **Tips:** Early in pregnancy, mothers should let their OB provider know if they have anemia, a history of bleeding, have received blood or if they plan to decline receiving blood during an emergency.

Infection

New mothers are at risk for infection.

- **Warning Signs:** Low-grade fever, chills, lower abdominal pain, muscle aches, fatigue, foul-smelling discharge, warm and painful redness near surgical incision site, headaches, paleness, loss of appetite or rapid heart rate.
- **Tips:** Mothers should wash their hands often, watch to see that caregivers wash their hands and ask visitors to wash their hands.

Depression

It is not unusual for new mothers to experience the baby blues. Postpartum depression affects 10-20% of new mothers.

- **Warning Signs:** Difficulty eating or sleeping, feelings of helplessness or sadness, not wanting to get out of bed, avoiding contact or bonding with baby, or thoughts of harming oneself or baby.
- **Tips:** It is important to talk about these signs and feelings with your OB provider, and there are resources to help.

If mothers experience any of these warning signs, they should call their OB provider or nurse immediately.

“It is critical to educate all new parents on how to spot warning signs for medical issues that may arise during and after pregnancy as it can help save a mother or baby’s life,” says Ana Pujols McKee, MD, executive vice president, chief medical officer, and chief diversity and inclusion officer, The Joint Commission. “Whether it’s your first child or third child, the new *Speak Up™ for New Parents* campaign provides helpful tips to recognize these warning signs and encourages parents to become advocates in their own care. If you think something is wrong, please speak up to your care team.”

As part of its efforts to address maternal health issues, The Joint Commission implemented [new requirements](#) to help improve the quality and safety of care provided to women during all stages of pregnancy and postpartum, effective January 1, 2021. In addition, The Joint Commission began to [publicly report](#) on two Perinatal Care (PC) measures in January 2021.

The *Speak Up™* campaign includes an informational poster in both English and Spanish, as well as an animated video that features examples on how to spot warning signs and prevent serious complications before and after pregnancy.

Organizations are free to reproduce and disseminate [Speak Up™ for New Parents](#) materials if they credit The Joint Commission.

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About the *Speak Up™* program

Launched in 2002, the award-winning [Speak Up™](#) program has been used in more than 70 countries. It encourages patients to be their own advocates and to:

- **Speak up**
- **Pay attention**
- **Educate yourself**
- **Advocates (family members and friends) can help**
- **Know about your new medicine**
- **Use a quality health care organization**
- **Participate in all decisions about your care**

The Joint Commission’s refreshed *Speak Up™* program that debuted in 2018, after national market research including focus group feedback from patients and their families.

For updates on new *Speak Up*[™] campaigns as they become available, sign up for email alerts or subscribe to the e-newsletter Joint Commission Online. For more information about the *Speak Up*[™] program, visit [The Joint Commission website](#).

About The Joint Commission

Founded in 1951, [The Joint Commission](#) seeks to continuously improve health care for the public, in collaboration with other stakeholders, by evaluating health care organizations and inspiring them to excel in providing safe and effective care of the highest quality and value. The Joint Commission accredits and certifies more than 22,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. An independent, nonprofit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Learn more about The Joint Commission at www.jointcommission.org.