

# Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Health Affairs (OASD/HA) Health Care Provider Convalescent Leave Recommendations



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# Postpartum Recovery

- While not considered a “condition” in the traditional sense, pregnancy and child birth impacts the birth parent and requires ongoing health care and sufficient time to recover.
- The time immediately following the birth of a child is critical for the long-term health and well-being of the birth parent and child.
- Many birth parents report feeling *mostly* recovered by 6-8 weeks, but recovery is unique, requiring individualized care.
- Birth parents who experience adverse maternal outcomes are at greater risk for future cardiovascular and metabolic conditions.
- Postpartum care is integral to facilitating appropriate and complete recovery from the impacts of pregnancy and childbirth.
- Postpartum care, is an ongoing process, with follow-up visits recommended within three weeks of the birth, with comprehensive visit no later than 12 weeks.



# Importance of Postpartum Convalescent Leave

- The physiologic changes and psychology impacts of pregnancy, along with the physical impacts of childbirth require rest and recovery, necessitating time away from work (convalescent leave).
- Convalescent leave is critical to ensure birth parents:
  - Have the time and ability to recover from the pregnancy and birth event, while managing the impacts of caring for a newborn.
  - Needed recovery time for complications or chronic conditions exacerbated by the pregnancy.
  - Attend postpartum appointments to assess recovering progress and provide needed care, and resources (i.e., treatment for complications, referrals for behavioral health conditions, such as postpartum depression, chronic disease management, lactation support, etc.).



# Health Care Provider & Convalescent Leave Recommendations

- Health care providers **make** recommendations for convalescent leave based upon individual health circumstances of the patient, the nature of the condition, needed treatment, and prognosis in accordance with clinical standards of care.
- Generally 6-8 weeks convalescent leave, postpartum, is considered standard for an uncomplicated birth event, at the provider's discretion.
- Additional convalescent leave may be recommended based on individual clinical need; if needed for treatment and recovery from complications during the pregnancy and birth event.



# Considerations for Convalescent Leave

## Considerations for Potential Additional Medical Care/Recovery Time

Gestational age at time of birth event	Infection or sepsis
Nature of the birth event; vaginal delivery v. cesarian	Cardiovascular concerns; hypertension, cardiomyopathy, preeclampsia
Overall health of the birth parent	Pelvic floor trauma or dysfunction
Excessive blood loss	Mental Health Conditions (i.e., postpartum depression, exacerbation of chronic conditions)
Anesthesia complications	Surgical scar infections, healing concerns
Blood clots	New symptoms or health concerns
Amniotic fluid embolism	



# References

- Neiger R. Long-Term Effects of Pregnancy Complications on Maternal Health: A Review. J Clin Med. 2017 Jul 27;6(8):76.
- Optimizing Postpartum Care, Committee Opinion Number 736, May 2018, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (reaffirmed 2021)
- VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline For the Management of Pregnancy, July 2023