



## WATERBURY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

### URGENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS DURING PREGNANCY AND IN THE YEAR AFTER DELIVERY

#### PREGNANCY-RELATED DEATHS

“Pregnancy-related death is one that occurs **during pregnancy or within one year of the end of a pregnancy**, from a pregnancy complication, a chain of events initiated by the pregnancy, or the aggravation of an unrelated condition by the physiologic effects of pregnancy”.

- **United States (US)** data shows: In 2022, 817 women died of maternal causes compared with 1,205 in 2021, 861 in 2020, 754 in 2019, and 658 in 2018.
- In **Connecticut**, there were an average of 5 pregnancy-related deaths per year in the period between 2015 and 2020.

*Source: CT Department of Public Health, Maternal Mortality Review Program*

**If you are pregnant or a new mom who has recently given birth, it's important to contact your healthcare provider immediately if you experience any of the following urgent signs and symptoms :**



#### Headache that does not go away or worsens

- Feels like the worst headache of your life.
- Lasts even after treatment with medication.
- Throbbing pain and is on one side of the head above the ear.



#### Breathlessness or difficulty breathing

- Feeling short of breath suddenly or over time.
- Feeling of tightness in the throat and/or chest.
- Breathing difficulty when laying down flat and needing to prop the head up with pillows.



#### Dizziness or fainting

- Fainting or passing out.
- Dizziness and lightheadedness that's ongoing or comes and goes over many days.
- Experience a gap in time of which one has no memory.



#### Chest pain or fast beating heart

- Feeling of tightness or pressure in the chest.
- Pain that travels to the back, neck, or arm.
- A fast heartbeat or a pounding like feeling in the chest.



#### Sudden change in vision

- Seeing flashes of light or bright spots.
- Having blind spots in the vision or unable to see at all for a short time.
- Blurry vision, unable to focus, or seeing double objects.



#### Severe and excess nausea and vomiting

- Feeling sick to the stomach, throwing up and can't keep water or other fluids in the stomach.
- Unable to drink for more than 8 hours or eat for more than 24 hours.



### **Resources:**

1. **Connecticut Department of Public Health. Maternal Mortality Review.** [https://portal.ct.gov/dph/knowledge-base/articles/parents-and-children/maternal-mortality-review?language=en\\_US](https://portal.ct.gov/dph/knowledge-base/articles/parents-and-children/maternal-mortality-review?language=en_US)
2. **CDC. Maternal Mortality Prevention.** [https://www.cdc.gov/maternal-mortality/?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/maternal-mortality/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/index.html)
3. **CDC. HERA HER Campaign. Signs and Symptoms of Urgent Maternal Warning Signs.** <https://www.cdc.gov/hearher/maternal-warning-signs/index.html>
4. **Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Warning signs for you and your baby.** <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Warning-Signs.aspx>





### Fever 100.4 or higher

- Having a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher.



### Thoughts about self harm or harming the baby:

- Having ideas about hurting yourself.
- Feeling sad, hopeless, worried or you are not good enough.
- Thinking about hurting the baby.



### Excessive swelling of hands, or face

- Excessive swelling in hands which makes it hard to bend the fingers or difficult to wear rings.
- Excessive swelling on the face that makes it hard to open your eyes, eyes feel heavy and look puffy.



### Excessive swelling or redness of legs

- Swelling, and/or pain in leg, usually in the muscles or in one leg.
- It may hurt to bend the foot for standing or walking.
- Painful leg areas can be red, swollen, and warm to the touch.



### Severe belly pain that does not go away

- Experiencing sharp, stabbing, or cramp-like belly pain that doesn't go away or worsens.
- Having severe chest, shoulder, or back pain.



### Baby movements slowing down or stopping during pregnancy

- Feeling that the baby has stopped moving or the baby is moving less than before.
- A sudden change in the baby's movement is more important than number of movements.



### Vaginal bleeding or fluid leaking/ discharge during or after pregnancy

- Any bleeding from the vagina that is more than spotting, like a period.
- Fluid leaking from vagina.
- Any vaginal discharge that smells bad.



### Overwhelming tiredness

- Sudden feeling of extreme tiredness and weakness.
- Not feel refreshed no matter how many hours you sleep.
- Feeling very sad and so tired that one could not get up to take care of the baby.

### How can we lower the risks and improve pregnancy outcomes?

- **Be aware of the above urgent maternal warning signs**
- **Communicate with your healthcare provider about your condition and treatment/management plan**
- **Get regular check-ups during your pregnancy**
- **Manage your chronic diseases**
- **Take medications as prescribed by your healthcare provider**
- **Maintain a healthy weight, diet, activity level**
- **Decrease stress and adapt healthy lifestyles**
- **Quit smoking, use of alcohol, illicit/substance abuse**

