

After the Baby: Postpartum Care

2024 Report

By Sam Juraschka, Justine Wang, and Saniha Shankar





Intro

In today's competitive business landscape, investing in employee well-being is more important than ever.

One crucial area where companies can make a significant impact is in providing robust postpartum benefits. Not only do these benefits support new parents during a critical transition period, but they also contribute to a more loyal, productive, and satisfied workforce.

This report explores the reasons companies should prioritize postpartum benefits, and provides actionable insights on how to implement, share, and measure the impact of these initiatives. By taking even small steps, organizations can foster a supportive environment that pays dividends in both employee welfare and business success.

Innovate Her

A BCG X offering to ignite and transform the woman's experience, by harnessing innovation to lead the next wave of growth.

The authors extend gratitude to their BCG colleagues, Melissa Souto, Callie Zhou, and Cecilia Villegas Nava, for the design of the report, and Diana Cordova and Manali Shinde-Patel, for their contributions to the research and analysis. Additionally, the authors wish to thank The Lactation Network and Origin for their partnership and advising on the methodology.

Postpartum Care Is A Necessity

More than half of deaths occur postpartum, and the economic toll is staggering

45%

of postpartum moms do not feel they received adequate care

40%

of postpartum moms do not attend a postpartum visit

The Gap To Adequate Care

- 1 Providers prioritize diagnosing the most severe conditions — but a comprehensive postpartum assessment should factor in all elements of physical, social, and psychological well-being.
- 2 When symptoms go untreated or misdiagnosed, patients can end up seeking emergency care. 5% of new mothers went to the emergency department within 10 days of giving birth.
- 3 Common, lower-acuity concerns (e.g., mood changes, latching issues, urinary incontinence) are most likely to go unaddressed due to provider shortages, long wait times, and limited insurance coverage. This hinders patient quality of life and ability to return to work.



Weeks following birth are critical for mother and infant.

Postpartum care plans today miss opportunities to **treat acute issues**, discuss **management of chronic conditions**, and engage patients in **preventative care**.

The Problem

Gaps in care severely impact **families**, **employers**, **providers**, and **payers**

Maternal Health Outcomes

~50%

of maternal deaths in US occurs in the postpartum period

Return to Work Support

~45%

of women do not return to work on average after giving birth

Family Planning & Support

~50%

of patients did not feel adequately prepared to take care of their health postpartum

Provider Gaps

~55%

of counties do not have at least 1 hospital providing obstetric care



\$18,865

Average per patient health costs associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care



\$2,854

Average per patient out-of-pocket payments for women enrolled in large group plans

Care enablement platforms are stepping in to address systemic gaps



There is a lack of proactive postpartum care, leading to **more than 50,000 women annually** experiencing maternal morbidity and complications.

60% of these maternal deaths are considered **preventable**.



As the US maternal mortality rate increases, several factors impact these poor outcomes:

- **Limited access to care**
- **Quality of care**
- **Lack of care coordination**



Patients and their families **do not feel adequately supported** by their medical providers, have limited insurance coverage, and have difficulty scheduling timely appointments.

There are key gaps in care for postpartum lactation support, physical therapy, and mental health.



Specialized platforms can bridge these gaps, offering in-person and virtual care.

Care enablement platforms also facilitate **end to end coordination of patient's treatment plans** and offer coverage through a broad array of insurance plans.



Employers can offer their support by offering **more holistic postpartum benefits plans**.

Unresolved symptoms leads to higher absenteeism, lower productivity, and reduced satisfaction at work.

Investment in postpartum care can **remove systemic burdens**



Lack of coverage and limited access to care providers exacerbate the gap — and are directly impacted by **employer engagement**, **payers**, and **policy changes**

Adequate postpartum coverage enables new moms to obtain services for full recovery and navigating challenges.

Corporations should provide comprehensive benefits that support families at a critical time:

- 90%+ of HR professionals understand women's health concerns around breast and cervical cancer, but only...

15% know about pelvic floor therapy and

40% know about lactation concerns

- 72% of HR professionals think that mammograms/breast cancer screenings are covered, versus...

25% for pelvic floor therapy and

41% for lactation

...despite both being imminent postpartum concerns

- Medicaid mandates 60 days of coverage, but the need for postpartum services extends beyond that.

American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 give states the option to expand coverage for postpartum Medicaid benefits to 12 months.

Corporations should work with care enablement platforms or health systems that **expand access to specialized providers**

Over 5M women

live in counties with limited or no maternity care access



Access is a core reason maternal death rates are rising, despite **more than 80% of deaths being preventable**



Nearly 70% of birth centers are located within just **10 states**

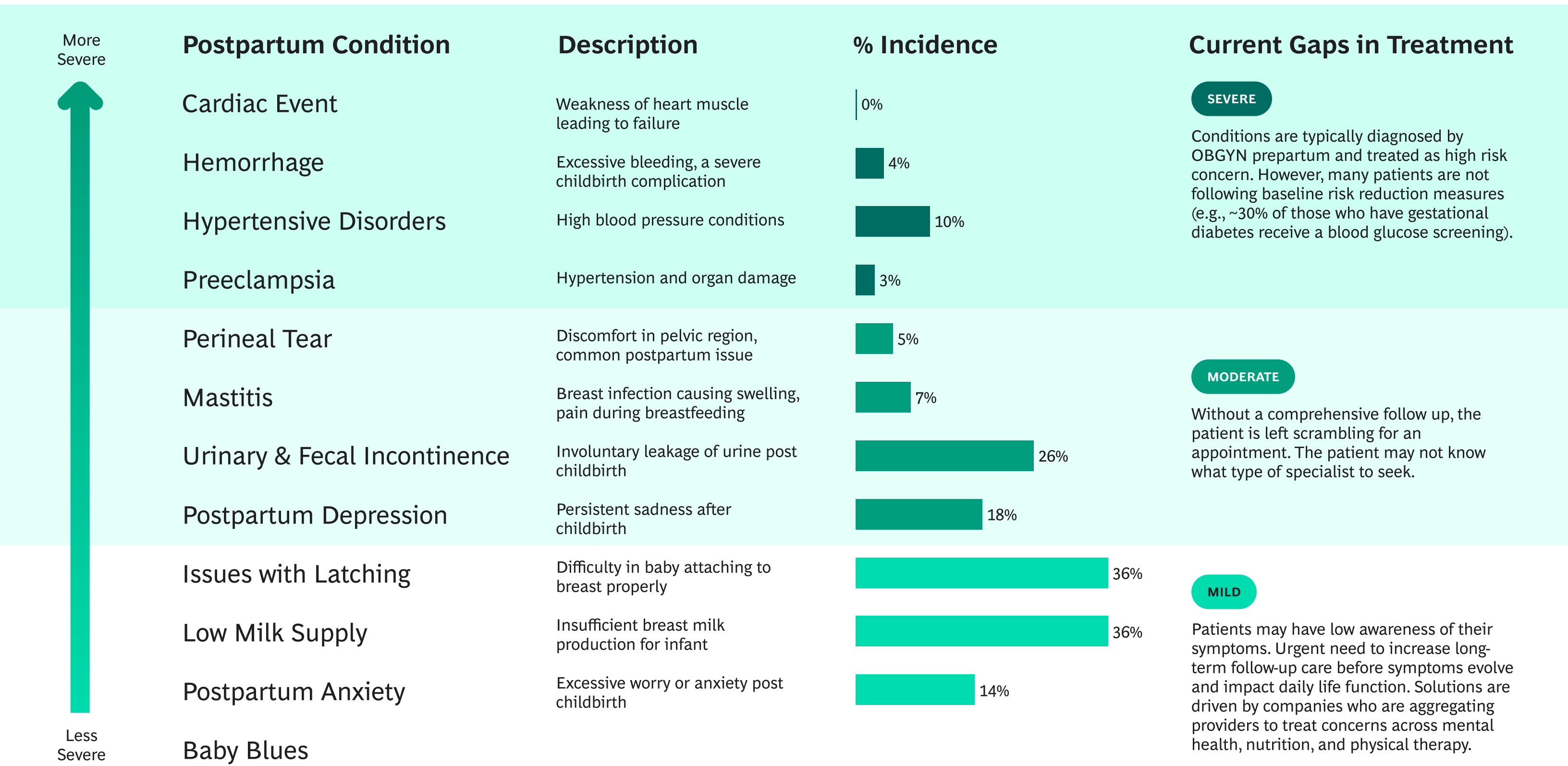


U.S. and Canada have the lowest overall supply of midwives and OB/GYNs, compared to other countries — 12 and 15 providers per 1,000 live births, respectively



Evidence-based telehealth services, enhanced localization of care, and strengthening provider networks can improve access to qualified providers.

Many complications can arise during pregnancy, and providers can assist in reducing risks during and after birth



Comprehensive postpartum care should aim to increase patient awareness, through **more proactive outreach for lactation, pelvic floor, and mental health care** in the first 12 weeks after giving birth

Everyone I had reached out to was busy or packed or full, and I just couldn't find availability. I was so busy that at some point I just gave up.

— New mother

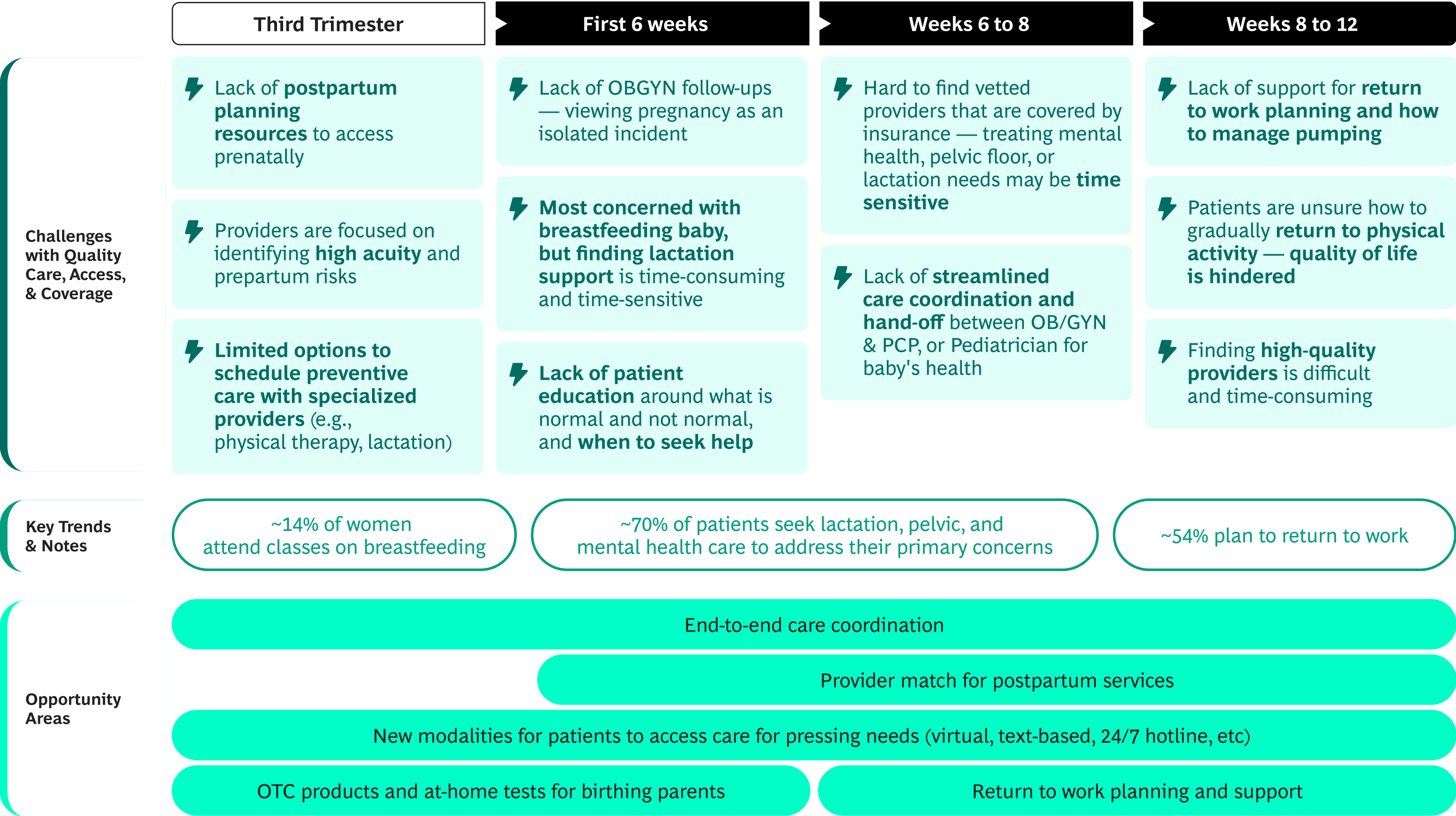
It was really hard to think as your body adapts. I know breastfeeding takes up a lot of brain power, but I didn't realize how much it actually takes away from your mental capacity.

— Mother of 2

I finally figured out I needed to talk to somebody. It's really hard to find somebody in your network that is accepting new patients and has postpartum knowledge.

— New mother

Patient Postpartum Care Journey



Innovative companies and digital solutions support parents and mitigate care gaps

Innovation in postpartum care services

End-to-end Care / One Stop Shop

End-to-end solutions offer care coordination teams and access to concierge providers



Enhanced triage for care coordination



Centralized provider marketplace

Credentialed Provider Networks

Patients can access credentialed providers that have experience in postpartum care



Centralized provider marketplace



Close gaps in care

New Modalities

Care is offered via new modalities to increase access (i.e. virtual options, outside partnerships for hospitals)



Available virtually



Close gaps in care

Innovation in Care Services

Remote monitoring and digital tracking apps allow patients to monitor their health at home



Close gaps in care



Improves patient education

We're making the case for corporations to enhance postpartum benefits — **offering high-quality care**

\$35k

Cost to employers per employee who does not return to workforce as a result of lack of maternal support

Source: BCG analysis, National Conference of State Legislatures, Kaiser Family Foundation

70%+

Patients expect employers to cover benefits such as mental health care and nutrition postpartum



50%+

Of pregnancy related deaths occur in the postpartum period — high quality care could decrease likelihood of complications



Improved postpartum benefits will **pay for themselves**

Improves healthcare outcomes for mother and baby, while driving return to work improvements



Employers

- Over **50% employers** are interested in a postpartum-specific benefit
- Among employers that are open to a postpartum specific benefit, **up to 75% view medical claim cost reduction as an important value proposition**
- **65% believe** offering postpartum benefits could **increase return to work rates**

Providers

- **~25% of providers** are leaving hospital settings to work in clinics or as 1099 providers — shifting care from hospital to platform
- Clinics, hospital systems, and care enablement platforms will form **stronger partnerships**
- **Telehealth** is enabling patients in care deserts to receive more immediate access to care when needed

Payers

- Gaps in private and publicly-funded programs leave **10% of women uninsured, while 60% have employer-sponsored coverage**
- **Medicaid finances over 40% of births** — recent policy expands benefits up to 12 months postpartum
- Payers seek to reduce the admin burden of credentialing individual providers — saving up to \$200 per provider by working with a network



Lactation care is critical to improving challenges with breastfeeding

93% of parents who had a lactation consultation before their baby was born said it contributed to their breastfeeding success

Case to Expand Benefits

Expanding coverage of lactation care creates more **financial accessibility to parents**, most of whom experience challenges with breastfeeding....

60% of mothers do not breastfeed for as long as intended due to:

- Lack of lactation education
- Unsupportive work policies
- Unsupportive hospital practices
- Issues with lactation and latching
- Cultural norms

Breastfeeding challenges can be unpredictable: Given the sudden severity of breastfeeding challenges and resulting health complications, **70% of patients** responded that they **would pay out of pocket to address severe issues.**

Expansion of insurance coverage is critical to drive patient access: Most patients (80%+) leverage insurance to pay for their lactation care services.

Qualified providers can be hard to find: 50% of mothers would have been unlikely to use lactation services without the support of a company that matches them to a lactation consultant.

Lactation challenges impact families: Unresolved symptoms lead to **higher absenteeism, lower productivity, and overall reduced satisfaction at work.**

Why is lactation care important?



Clinical improvements for breastfeeding parents:

Increasing breastfeeding rates around the world could prevent 20,000 annual maternal deaths from breast cancer.

Women who breastfeed for 30+ months are less likely to suffer from ovarian cancer than women who breastfed for under 10 months.

Other benefits include lower risk of postpartum depression, cardiovascular issues, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and endometrial or thyroid cancers.



Clinical improvements for infants:

Higher rates of breastfeeding could reduce infection-related mortality by 88%, mostly due to reducing cases of respiratory tract infections and diarrhea.

Exclusively breastfed infants had higher IQ results compared with bottle-fed infants.

Other benefits include a reduced risk of infections, digestive and respiratory issues, diabetes, leukemia, and obesity.

Innovative companies in lactation care are expanding coverage with payers, offering rapid and flexible support, and providing educational resources for parents

How Companies are Approaching

Innovation is focused on expanding coverage of lactation care, and immediately matching patients to qualified and vetted providers



Contracting with payers to expand coverage and set market reimbursement



Offering extent of services from in-home to telehealth within 48 hours of request



Providing access to vetted educational resources to support parents with vital information

Over \$2k

saved per employee from resolving lactation concerns

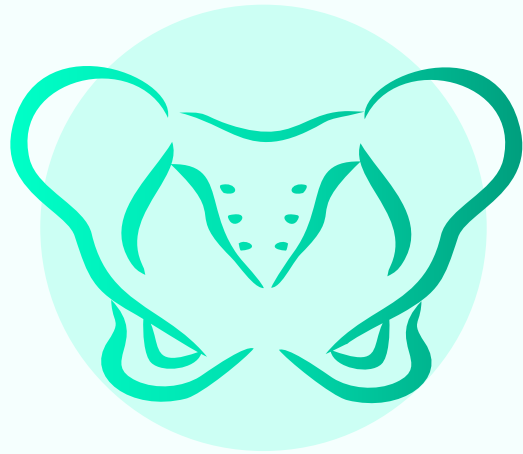


The Lactation Network is the largest, national network of thousands of International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) operating in person and virtually in 50 states

“The Lactation Network has been on the front line of this issue for years and is the only national provider of expert, in-person lactation care delivered by International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs). TLN also raises awareness and advises on crucial federal legislation to increase equitable, insurance-covered lactation care as mandated under the Affordable Care Act.

I spend every day working to ensure that every family that wants and needs lactation care has access to it... human breast milk is universally acknowledged as the gold standard for infant feeding. That said... many families simply do not have the time, resources, support, or physical ability to breastfeed their babies... Without accessible, comprehensive lactation care, parents don’t have the option to choose what’s best for their children at a critical time in their development.”

— Sarah Kellogg Neff, CEO of The Lactation Network



Pelvic floor symptoms are common yet often untreated, with lack of treatment significantly impacting women's quality of life and productivity

Where is the gap?

Pelvic floor disorders are highly prevalent in the US — experienced by 1 in 3 women.

Conditions primarily include urinary incontinence, fecal incontinence, and pelvic organ prolapse. These conditions often hinder daily life activities.

Pelvic floor issues are common, yet often ignored: 83% of U.S. women ages 18–59 experienced at least one pelvic health symptom in the past year, across bladder & bowel-related symptoms and sex-related symptoms.

Symptoms can be exacerbated with pregnancy and childbirth: 79% of women who had a baby in the last 5 years said pelvic health symptoms negatively impacted their lives. Many do not receive the care that they need, given only 40% OBGYNs routinely ask about symptoms.

However, few seek treatment: Fewer than half of women with urinary incontinence and 30% with accidental bowel leakage seek care for these concerns. Nearly 1 in 4 postpartum women say they felt 'not at all supported' in their physical recovery by their medical providers for their most recent delivery.

Providers are hard to find and often not covered by insurance: Providers are also limited in that there are fewer than 10k providers to treat 40 million people. 80% are estimated to be out of network — creating an affordability barrier.

Employers should sponsor access to care as symptoms will affect parents' abilities to return to and continue working: Pelvic floor dysfunction must be treated since the symptoms are life disrupting and can worsen over time – the majority of women say their symptoms negatively impact their lives.

Pelvic floor care impacts physical well-being and productivity

— many women do not receive a diagnosis or care for their symptoms.



Clinical improvements for parents:

Proactive care will help meet severe needs — 96% of U.S. women ages 18–59 who report pelvic health symptoms in the past year have not been diagnosed with a related condition (urinary or fecal incontinence, chronic constipation, pelvic organ prolapse, coccydynia, pubic symphysis dysfunction, vulvovaginal pain disorder, etc.) by a doctor — indicating these conditions remain untreated for long lengths of time.

86% of women who have given birth in the last year reported receiving no guidance on how to heal their pelvic floor after birth.

64% of women with pelvic health symptoms reported that these symptoms negatively impact their lives.

It affects women of all ages, yet only 14% of postpartum women reported receiving support for basic care items, such as medical guidance on healing their pelvic floor after childbirth.

Patients who seek care experience improvements in their symptoms — including pelvic organ support, bowel and bladder control, alleviation of pain, and restoration of sexual function. These benefits, in turn, enhance their return to their lifestyles and productivity.

Innovation in pelvic floor therapy includes virtual and in-clinic care, access to exercise programs, and improving preparation and support for providers

How Companies are Approaching

Innovation focused on remote exercises and progress tracking, virtual and in-clinic care



Care setting focused on 1:1 in person treatment in clinics or virtual care, reducing likelihood of provider burnout



Telehealth exercise programs and progress tracking



Facilitating pelvic health mentorships and clinical rotations for PT students and new grads

~\$20k

cost per patient per year for unresolved chronic pelvic pain

Origin.

Origin is a nationwide provider of pelvic floor and women's health physical therapy, with virtual care in 50 states, 17 clinics, 42M covered lives, and 98 NPS.

“Origin aims to provide transformative access to pelvic floor physical therapy, in person and virtually. Their goal is to dramatically evolve the standard of care offered to women at every stage of their life, from sex-related pain to postpartum and menopause.”

— Vogue

“The pelvic floor is just as important in your daily life as your Achilles is for running, because we use it for everything.”

— Liz Miracle, Head of Clinical Quality & Education at Origin, New York Times

“We’re proud to have earned the trust of over 1.5k referring providers and to have helped 35k+ patients feel good in their bodies.”

— Carine Carmy, CEO & Co-Founder of Origin



Maternal mental health disorders are serious yet often overlooked, significantly impacting mothers' productivity and health, with profound effects on their children

Case to Expand Benefits

Postpartum mental health disorders like PPD and PPA are serious conditions that **affect mother's abilities to bond and care for their babies**, yet screening methods and diagnosis are often glossed over by providers.

Postpartum mental health conditions are experienced by most mothers:

Postpartum depression and other perinatal mood disorders affect up 1 in 5 parents in the postpartum period. The 'baby blues' affect ~80% of women.

Screenings do not always result in adequate treatment or intervention: PPD is diagnosed through exams often 4-6 weeks after delivery, and includes when 5+ depressive symptoms are present. Many parents are not vocal about their symptoms at these check ups.

Not treating PPD could result in costly outcomes, and negatively impact health of parent and baby: Depressed women were significantly more likely to utilize emergency room care (~18%) versus non-depressed women (~4%).

Treatments are evolving, and FDA has approved a PPD-specific drug treatment: PPD can be treated through mental health counseling with a licensed provider, antidepressants, or home therapy. Zuranolone is the first FDA approved drug for PPD treatment, passing approval in 2023.

Untreated PPD will drive up healthcare costs: Helping patients seek and receive treatment is a step towards improving health outcomes and bonding between mother and baby, presenteeism in the workplace, and reducing the likelihood of more severe intervention.

Why is mental health important?



Clinical improvements for treating mental health:

Mental health impacts emotional, psychological, and social well-being — and can prevent people from leading productive and healthy lives.

Randomized trials found that counseling improved PPD symptoms by ~70% and by ~80% if combined with medication.

Preventing perinatal depression through interventions like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and interpersonal therapy (IPT) before the onset of depression, can reduce depressive symptoms by ~40% in at-risk women.



Clinical improvements for infants:

Improvement in maternal mental health leads to improved bonding and development for infants, reducing the likelihood of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional delays.

Infants whose parents are impacted by PPD could cause poor cognitive functioning, behavioral inhibition, emotional maladjustment, violent behavior, externalizing disorders, and psychiatric and medical disorders in adolescence.

Innovation in mental health treatments for perinatal mood disorders, including postpartum depression and anxiety

How Companies are Approaching

Innovation focused on increasing access to specialized providers and group therapy



Focus on individual or group talk therapy — sense of community helps reduce symptoms



Offer parents return to work coaching and telemedicine to increase optionality



Additional preventative counseling and screenings for postpartum depression

Employers spend
1.5-3x of an employee's salary
on recruiting, hiring, and training a new hire

Many mental health companies are focused on bringing attention to postpartum depression and treatment

“Companies have the ability to address these costs in a number of key ways. For example, offering new moms back-to-work coaching as well as adopting policies that allow mothers to return to work at a gradual pace after maternity leave can help reduce some of the stress that makes them more vulnerable to mental health issues.”

— Maven Clinic

“Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders affect one in five women during the motherhood journey, but only 20% get screened for mental health issues, with 75% of them not receiving treatment. [We believe] the prevalence of mental health issues during motherhood is much higher given the lack of screening and high social stigma.”

— Seven Starling

Tangible nudges to inspire action



Drive Action

No intervention is too small

Treat maternal care as an investment,
not an expense

Start with one postpartum area where
there is a gap and make the case to
offer more



Share Impact

& see the ROI of your initiatives

Track data to measure the impact of
your investments

Use this data to build the case for
expanding your company's
postpartum benefits



Measure Effects

& inspire others to reduce the
maternal care gaps

Collect and share personal stories from
employees to highlight the positive
changes brought by your initiatives

