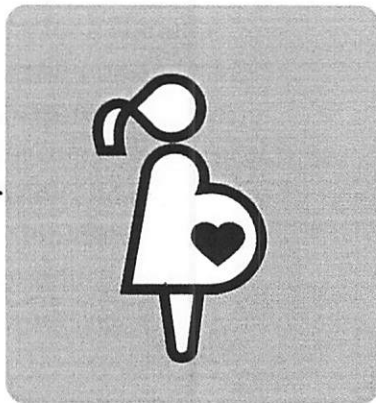




# Women's Health

## Maternal Health

Maternal health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.



## Maternal Death

Maternal death is defined as death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.

Women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Maternal mortality is higher among women living in rural areas and poorer communities.

## Causes

Maternal death is caused by the complications of pregnancy, labor, delivery, and the immediate post-partum period, such as bleeding, infection, pregnancy-related high blood pressure, and difficult labor.

## Prevention

Encourage women to:

- Avail themselves of antenatal care in pregnancy, skilled care during childbirth,

and care and support in the weeks after childbirth.

- Visit the health center for checkup as soon as pregnancy is determined and follow health worker's advice relative to antenatal checkups.
- Give birth in a health facility to make sure that she is assisted by a skilled health professional.
- Practice good hygiene at all times.
- If necessary, seek advice from health worker on responsible parenthood, nutrition, and child care.

## Leading Causes of Death among Women of Reproductive Age (15–49)

Biological factors, lack of access to information and health services, economic vulnerability, and unequal power in sexual relations that expose young women to infection, particularly HIV

- *Tuberculosis*  
Tuberculosis is often linked to HIV infection and the third leading cause of death among women of reproductive age worldwide, particularly in low-income countries.
- *Cervical Cancer*  
Cervical cancer is the second most common type of cancer among women, with virtually all cases linked to genital infection with the human papillomavirus (HPV).



- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)*  
Tobacco use and the burning of solid fuels for indoor heating and cooking are the primary risk factors for COPD – a lung ailment – in women. Women prepare most of the family food, hence, the burden of COPD caused by exposure to indoor smoke is over 50% higher among women than among men.
- Injuries*  
Injuries from road traffic accidents figure among the top 10 causes of death among adult women (20-59 years) globally. Burns are a leading cause of death among women aged 15-44. Women, more than men, suffer significantly from fire-related injuries and death due to cooking accidents and domestic violence.
- Violence*  
Women who have been physically or sexually abused have higher rates of mental ill-health, unintended pregnancies, abortions, and miscarriages than non-abused women.
- Depression and Suicide*  
Women are more susceptible to depression and anxiety than men. Mental

disorders following childbirth, including depression, are estimated to affect about 13% of women within a year of delivery. Suicide is the seventh top cause of death globally for women aged 20-59 years.

#### **Leading Causes of Death among Older Women (60 Years and Over)**

- Breast, Lung, and Colon Cancer are among the top 10 causes of death of older women globally.
- Cardiovascular disease (mainly heart attacks/ischaemic heart disease and stroke), often thought to be a “male” problem, is the main killer of older women. Women often show different symptoms from men, which contributes to under diagnosis of heart disease in women. Women also tend to develop heart disease later in life than men.

#### **References**

- WHO- Media Centre.(2012). Maternal mortality. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs348/en/index.html>
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