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10. Postpartum management of women

10.1 Antiretroviral therapy

10.1.1	All women are recommended to continue cART postpartum.	1A
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It is recommended that all women remain on ART postpartum [1,2], although ultimately this is a woman's choice. For women who start on ART in pregnancy there may be an opportunity to simplify regimens, for example to once daily co-formulated regimens, or switch to newer regimens. Additionally, women who started darunavir/r bd in pregnancy should be switched to daily dosing unless there is evidence of significant genotypic resistance (see also section 6) [3]. Viral rebound has been demonstrated in women living with HIV postpartum, with the risk greater than in non-pregnant women with HIV [4]. Adherence can decline in the postnatal period as a result of concerns about side effects, the lifelong nature of treatment, fear of HIV status being shared and fear of HIV-related stigma within the community and in clinics [5-7]. It is important to be aware of the potential for compromised adherence, and to provide appropriate support including peer mentoring, which has been shown to improve adherence [6].

10.2 Support services

10.2.1	Women should have their support needs assessed postpartum and be referred to appropriate services in the Trust, community and/or voluntary groups without delay.	1D
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The support required by each woman and the support services available at each HIV service will vary considerably and should be individualised for each woman. Support required may include child care, help with housing, access to food, peer mentoring and legal and advocacy services. The HIV MDT should work with local peer-led and voluntary organisations to tailor support to each woman. Referrals to partner organisations should have commenced at first presentation in pregnancy (see section 4) and be continued in the postnatal period. For women with drug or alcohol issues, continued support should be offered on an on-going basis. The minority of women who experience pregnancy loss may require additional support through HIV peer mentoring or support services such as the Miscarriage Association (www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/) or Sands (www.sands.org.uk/).

10.3 Postnatal follow-up of women

10.3.1	All women should be reviewed in the postnatal period by a named member of the MDT within 4–6 weeks.	1C
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It is important to be aware that there may be issues with retention in care after pregnancy, with disengagement of care rates estimated at 12% in both the NSHPC and the Swiss Cohort, and caring responsibilities identified as a barrier to accessing care [8-10]. It is essential to see all women in the postpartum period for follow-up of both medical and social issues, and to promote linkage back to general HIV care. We recommend that all women receive an appointment to see a named member of the HIV MDT and adequate ART until this appointment prior to discharge after delivery. This is particularly important for women newly diagnosed with HIV in pregnancy. The infant's postnatal 6-week check provides a good opportunity to also see the woman. A full assessment of the birth experience is important to provide constructive feedback to the MDT and to ensure pregnancy pathways are working well. This will also allow women to receive support for any difficult experiences they may have had. Should a woman miss her first postnatal appointment, every effort should be made by the HIV MDT to contact her and address any barriers in order to re-establish care.