



WHO recommendations  
**Uterotonics for the  
prevention of postpartum  
haemorrhage**



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WHO recommendations: uterotonics for the prevention of postpartum haemorrhage

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# Acronyms and abbreviations

CERQual	Confidence in the Evidence from Reviews of Qualitative research
CREP	Centro Rosarino de Estudios Perinatales
DOI	declaration of interest
ERG	Evidence Review Group
ESG	Evidence Synthesis Group
EtD	Evidence to Decision
FIGO	International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics
GDG	Guideline Development Group
GRADE	Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation
GSG	Guideline Steering Group
HRP	The UNDP–UNFPA–UNICEF–WHO–World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction
ICM	International Confederation of Midwives
ICN	International Council of Nurses
IM	intramuscular
IPA	International Pediatric Association
IU	international units
IV	intravenous
µg	microgram
MNH	maternal and newborn health
PO	per os (orally)
PICO	population (P), intervention (I), comparator (C), outcome (O)
PPH	postpartum haemorrhage
SoF	Summary of Findings
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

# Executive summary

## Introduction

Postpartum haemorrhage (PPH) is commonly defined as a blood loss of 500 ml or more within 24 hours after birth, and affects about 5% of all women giving birth around the world. Globally, nearly one quarter of all maternal deaths are associated with PPH, and in most low-income countries it is the main cause of maternal mortality. Improving care during childbirth to prevent PPH is a necessary step towards the achievement of the health targets of the third Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 3), particularly target 3.1: reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100 000 live births by 2030. Efforts to prevent and reduce morbidity and mortality due to PPH can help address the profound inequities in maternal and perinatal health globally. To achieve this, skilled health personnel, health managers, policy-makers and other stakeholders need up-to-date and evidence-informed recommendations to guide clinical policies and practices.

In 2017, an Executive Guideline Steering Group (GSG) for World Health Organization (WHO) maternal and perinatal health recommendations prioritized the updating of the existing WHO recommendations on the use of uterotonics for PPH prevention, in response to the availability of new evidence. The recommendations in this document thus supersede previous WHO recommendations on the use of uterotonics for PPH prevention as published in the 2012 guideline, *WHO recommendations for the prevention and treatment of postpartum haemorrhage*.

## Target audience

The primary audience for these recommendations includes health professionals who are responsible for developing national and local health care guidelines and protocols (particularly those related to PPH prevention and treatment) and those involved in the provision of care to women and their newborns during labour and childbirth, including midwives, nurses, general medical practitioners and obstetricians, as well as managers of maternal and child health programmes, and relevant staff in ministries of health and training institutions, in all settings.

## Guideline development methods

The updating of these recommendations was guided by standardized operating procedures in accordance with the process described in the *WHO handbook for guideline development*. The recommendations were initially developed and updated using the following process:

- i. identification of priority questions and outcomes;
- ii. retrieval of evidence;

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