

Postpartum Instructions

This information is intended to help you after our delivery. Please remember to feel free to call our office at any time with questions that you might have after reading this information. We also welcome any comments or suggestions regarding your care before and during your hospitalization. After returning home from the hospital, please call our office to schedule your postpartum visit four weeks after your delivery.

Postpartum Recovery – Your hospital stay will routinely be from two to four days depending on whether you had a Cesarean section or vaginal delivery. This, of course, will depend on the rate of your recovery and whether or not you experienced any problems during your pregnancy, delivery, or postpartum course. Most C-section patients stay in the hospital for three days. Most vaginal delivery patients stay in the hospital for 24 – 48 hours. With either type of delivery, it will still require weeks for your body to return to its normal state.

Activity – it is important that you are careful not to overdo your activity during your first week at home. This is particularly true for C-section patients.

- **Vaginal delivery** – The amount of postpartum activity we recommend for you will vary depending on whether or not you had any complications during your pregnancy, delivery, or postpartum. Any special restrictions or special care needed will likely have been addressed at the time of your discharge by either your doctor or your nurse. Overall, immediately after delivery, you may be up and around the house, do light household chores, and provide the basic care needed for your baby. You may go up and down stairs, ride in a car, eat whatever you like and take showers or tub baths. If you are feeling well enough, you may drive after 7 to 10 days. After one to two weeks, you may start to gradually resume normal activities. Nothing is to be placed in your vagina for at least four weeks (no douching, tampons, or intercourse). It is a good idea to continue taking your prenatal vitamins until your postpartum exam.
- **C-section** – during the first two to three weeks, we do not want you to do any straining or heavy lifting. You may go up and down stairs with care. You may take showers at any point after leaving the hospital and may take tub baths after your skin incision is completely healed. Pay special attention to your incision, and keep it clean and dry. For the first week, we would like you to clean your incision several times a day with soap and water. Please do not put any lotions, powders, ointments, etc. on your incision unless instructed to do so by your doctor. You may drive after about two to three weeks or when you are no longer taking any narcotic medication. After three to four weeks, you may gradually resume normal activities. Nothing is to be placed in your vagina until your postpartum exam (no douching, tampons, or intercourse). It is a good idea to continue taking your prenatal vitamins until your postpartum exam.

Emotions – Many new mothers experience postpartum depression for several days to even weeks after their babies are born. This is normal and should go away within two to four weeks. This is partially due to hormonal changes, fatigue, and the stress of caring for a new baby. Getting plenty of rest, eating right, making time for yourself, and allowing someone else to help you care for the baby will help you get through this difficult time. If you feel that you are having excessive problems with this or if these feelings persist for more than a couple of weeks, please call the office.

Vaginal Bleeding – You will continue to have vaginal bleeding or bloody discharge after you get home. This will usually require a pad. Bleeding may occur periodically until your first period. For non-breast feeding moms, your first period is likely to occur in four to eight weeks. For breast feeding moms, your period may not return until you begin weaning your baby from breast milk. It is important to remember, for both breast feeding and non-breast feeding moms, that pregnancy can occur even before your first period comes. Pregnancy can also occur during breast feeding.

Episiotomy – If you had an episiotomy or a vaginal or labial tear, discomfort may persist for three to four weeks after you have the baby. Swelling of the vaginal or anal area is normal for the first few days. There are several things you can do to relieve some of the discomfort and help hasten the healing:

- Pat the area with Tucks pads or other similar pads.
- Apply medicated sprays, ointments, etc. which contain lidocaine or “caine” derivatives.
- Keep the area very clean by gently cleaning with soap and water.

Constipation – Constipation is often a problem for several days after delivery. This is a combination of the change in your routine, pain medications you may be taking, and the fear of harming your stitches. Having a bowel movement will not harm your stitches although it may initially be painful. In order to minimize constipation:

- Drink lots of fluids, especially water.
- Eat a well-balanced diet, including lots of fiber
- Use over-the-counter stool softeners like Colace for the first several days. Most of the over-the-counter medicines are safe for you to take at this time, even if breast feeding.

Breast Feeding – Breast feeding is a very rewarding experience, but can be quite frustrating to new moms. You may have questions concerning breast feeding which arise after your discharge from the hospital. The hospital has lactation nurses who are extremely helpful. Breast pumps, supplies, etc. can be obtained through the lactation office. The telephone number is 877-1978.

Here are some helpful hints about breast feeding:

- Provide adequate time for breast feeding, especially in the beginning when you and your baby are trying to figure it all out.
- Drink plenty of water. Breast feeding can dehydrate you.

- Make sure you are eating a balanced diet which includes lots of dairy products and other foods which contain adequate calcium.
- Continue taking your prenatal vitamins
- Check with us or your pediatrician before taking any medications because many medicines can be passed to the baby through your milk.

If engorgement occurs:

- Massage firm areas of the breasts gently to help express trapped milk.
- Take warm showers and let the water run over your breasts.
- Apply warm packs on your breasts.
- Take 600 – 800 mg of ibuprofen every eight hours to decrease tenderness.

When you decide to wean your baby, your breasts may get extremely tender. To help during this time, wear a tight exercise bra to compress your breasts as much as possible. You may also find that placing cold compresses (ice packs, cabbage leaves, bag of frozen vegetables) on your breasts may help. Ibuprofen will likely also help. If at any time during breast feeding you develop extreme soreness, redness, lumps, or fever, please notify the office. This may be indicative of mastitis, which is a breast infection that needs to be treated.

Sexual Activity – There are many factors which play a part in resuming sexual activity. Tender breasts, a sore vagina, fatigue from caring for a new baby, and the hormonal fluctuations surrounding this time all affect your sexual desires. Generally, intercourse may be resumed four weeks after delivery. This may be longer for a C-section. Don't forget that pregnancy can occur before your first period. You and your doctor can discuss contraception at your postpartum visit four weeks after delivery.

Postpartum Exercise – Overall, we encourage postpartum exercise. This will not only help you get off some of the “baby weight”, but will also help in your recovery. In general, if you have a vaginal delivery, you can resume light exercise such as walking within one to two weeks. If you had a C-section, we often prefer for you to wait until after your postpartum exam.