

Postpartum Guidelines

The postpartum period is a time of extremes – happiness, relief, worry, pride, fatigue, love, anger, confusion and elation. We hope these guidelines will help make the transition to parenthood smoother. Please call the office your first week home to schedule your post partum visit.

REST

One of the most important things you can do to make the transition easier is to get plenty of rest. The physical toll that pregnancy, labor, delivery, and caring for a newborn 24 hours a day takes on your body is hard to overestimate. We recommend that in the first two weeks you limit your activities and responsibilities to caring for yourself and your baby. That means no cooking, shopping, cleaning, driving, or laundry, if possible. Whenever the baby naps, you should also lie down. Resist the urge to dust!

Once two weeks have passed, you may begin to gradually return to full activity at home. Add one or two new activities a day and slowly work yourself back to normal over the next month. Please do not embark on a strenuous exercise program prior to your 6 week check up. Kegel exercises for bladder control and vaginal tone, walking and stretching are permissible.

PERSONAL CARE

In the first two weeks postpartum you will experience vaginal bleeding on and off that may be moderately heavy. Passing occasional clots (plum sized or less) in this time frame is also normal. Too much activity may lead to heavier bleeding. If you are repeatedly soaking a pad in less than 30 minutes, please call our office. Your flow will gradually lessen and then stop, usually by 4 – 6 weeks postpartum. If you had stitches they will dissolve on their own.

To avoid infection we advise no sexual intercourse until after the 6 week exam. However, should you choose to be sexually active, be sure to use condoms.

You may use a stool softener, such as Colace or Metamucil, to speed return of normal bowel function. If you have developed hemorrhoids ask for specific information regarding care.

If you had a cesarean section the incision requires no special care, beyond usual showers or baths. A small amount of clean drainage is not unusual. If the incision becomes red, sore, or drains large amounts of fluid or pus, please call the office.

Regardless of your delivery type, restrict your activity the first two weeks to caring only for baby and yourself. This limited activity is needed for a healthy recovery.

BREAST FEEDING

The first two weeks are the hardest! To minimize nipple soreness be sure to rotate nursing positions with each feeding (cradle, football or lying down), let the breasts air dry every time, and use a pacifier if the baby wants to suck but isn't hungry. Stay well hydrated by drinking 16 ounces of liquid every time you feed the baby. Nursing in the same quiet, comfortable place every time you feed the baby in the first two weeks may help the milk flow. LaLeche League is a network of nursing moms that can help with free advice. For information contact the newborn nursery at Sparrow Hospital. Private lactation consultants are also available and for a fee will come to your home to help with breast feeding. Some insurances will cover this cost.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT TO MOTHERHOOD

Becoming a parent is one of the most profound experiences of life and it happens so fast! Give yourself and your family time to adjust to all the changes that are occurring. Try to share your feelings, both positive and negative, with those you are close to.

Most women experience times of sadness, worry, anger or fear in the first few months following delivery. Talking with a friend, partner, or relative and getting some extra rest for a few days usually helps considerably. If you find that these unpleasant emotions don't improve, you may be experiencing an episode of postpartum depression. This is a treatable condition! Please call us and let us help you feel better again.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU IF YOU EXPERIENCE:

- Persistent lower abdominal pain
- Foul smelling flow
- Persistent, heavy vaginal bleeding
- Temperature over 100 degrees
- Redness, pain, and swelling in one leg
- Signs of postpartum depression
- Bladder symptoms of pain and frequent urination

Thank you for allowing us to be part of your family's birth experience. It is truly a privilege.