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Postpartum Instructions for Mothers

Please call to make an appointment for your 6 week postpartum visit. If you had a c-section, you will need a 2 week postpartum visit as well.

This information is to be used as a guideline for mothers and families, to assist in caring for themselves and their newborns. Follow these instructions unless otherwise instructed by your physician.

Medications

You may take Ibuprofen which is also known as Motrin or Advil. You may take 600 mg every 6 hours (or 800 mg every 8 hours) as needed for discomfort. Ibuprofen is preferable to Percocet because it does not cause sleepiness or constipation and it is non-addictive. Do not take Ibuprofen on an empty stomach.

If you need additional pain relief, continue taking Ibuprofen, and add Percocet or Vicodin. You may take 1-2 Percocet or 1-2 Vicodin by mouth every 3-4 hours as needed for moderate to severe pain. Do not take on an empty stomach. These are narcotic medications that may cause sedation and constipation. Both medications are safe while breastfeeding.

Rest

Rest! Do not do heavy housework or strenuous exercise for two weeks. Walking is the exercise of choice during this time period. If you had a vaginal delivery, and are not taking narcotics, then it is fine to drive. If you had a c-section, do not drive for 1-2 weeks (or longer if you are still taking narcotics).

If you had a C-Section, then you should avoid heavy lifting for 6 weeks. You may carry your baby in a car seat, but nothing heavier. It is fine to go up and down stairs.

Diet

- Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water per day.
- Eat plenty of proteins, fruits, and vegetables, and drink plenty of milk.
A small bowl of bran daily will prevent constipation.
- If you are not breastfeeding, continue to take your prenatal vitamin for 6 weeks. If you are breastfeeding, take your prenatal vitamin as long as you are breastfeeding. If you were taking iron supplements during your pregnancy, continue until your 6 week postpartum visit.
- Ask your primary care provider if you should continue taking prenatal vitamins daily.
- An adequate diet as shown above is important especially if you are breastfeeding. It takes about 800 calories a day to produce the milk the baby needs.
- Remember, if you do not eat, you will become fatigued, and milk volume will decrease.

Breastfeeding

Wash your breasts with water daily for cleanliness: soap can be very drying and is not necessary. Air dry nipples after each feeding. If nipples are sore, apply a few drops of lanolin after feeding and let air dry. Cooled, wet tea bags over your nipples can also be soothing. If your breasts are engorged, apply warm packs and express milk.

Non-Breastfeeding

Wear a well-fitting bra for support. Use ice packs to relieve discomfort from engorgement (a bag of frozen peas for each breast works well). Avoid nipple stimulation and do not express milk, as this encourages the production of more milk. Non-breastfeeding engorgement will subside in 24-72 hours. You may use pain medication as directed above.

Uterine Cramps

Uterine cramping is normal, especially while breastfeeding. This cramping is how the uterus stops bleeding and returns to its pre-pregnant size. The uterus takes 4-8 weeks to return to its pre-pregnant size.

Vaginal Bleeding and Discharge

Postpartum vaginal discharge, also called lochia, usually lasts about 2 to 6 weeks, yet even up to 8 weeks is normal. The color will change from bright red to brownish to tan and will decrease each week. It is normal to occasionally have a heavier gush of blood, especially after breastfeeding or with increased activity. Your bleeding should then return to the amount of flow you had prior to the gush of blood. Normal bleeding is less than a pad per half hour. If you are soaking a large maxi pad (soaked front to back, side to side, through and through) more than every ½ hour, more than once, please call your doctor. Do not use tampons until after your six week postpartum visit. Your period will resume in approximately 6-8 weeks if you are not breastfeeding. If you are breastfeeding, it is common not to have your period.

Intercourse and Pelvic Rest

Avoid tampons until your postpartum visit. Do not douche. Generally, we recommend abstaining from intercourse until you are 6 weeks postpartum.

- Gentleness and added lubrication may be needed for comfort when you first resume sexual activity.
- Breastfeeding mothers may ovulate before their first menstrual period; therefore, it is possible to get pregnant even before menstruation has resumed.
- Foam and condoms will provide contraception if sexual activity is resumed before 6 weeks postpartum.
- Birth control should be discussed at the 6-week postpartum visit.

Episiotomy Care

A “Sitz Bath” is simply sitting in a tub of warm water for 15 minutes, 2-3 times per day. This will help relieve the discomfort. Tucks pads, Witch Hazel and Lanacaine, may be applied to the external vaginal area as needed. You may also use oral pain medications as described above. Stitches will dissolve in 1-3 weeks. You will be more comfortable if you are not constipated; please follow directions above to prevent/treat constipation.

Hemorrhoids

Sitz baths, as described above, can help alleviate hemorrhoid pain as well. You can also use topical agents such as Tuck pads, Witch Hazel pads, or Preparation H or Preparation HC. A high fiber diet and six to eight glasses of water a day will help keep your stools soft and prevent hemorrhoids.

Emotional Changes

You may feel tired, anxious or sad and you may notice you cry very easily. This is normal and is called “postpartum blues” or “the baby blues”. These feelings can begin a few days after delivery and usually disappear in about a week or two. Prolonged sadness may indicate Postpartum Depression. Please call the office to speak with us if you are experiencing prolonged or severe sadness

Signs and symptoms of postpartum depression may include any or all of the following:

- Sleep disturbance
- Loss of appetite
- Fear and anxiety
- Hopelessness
- Hostility or self-blame
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions

You should seek professional help if signs and symptoms of postpartum depression are experienced.

CALL OUR OFFICE IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING PROBLEMS OCCUR:

- Fever greater than 101
- Cesarean incision that is red, draining or increasingly painful.
- Signs of a breast infection; red and painful area on your breast, especially if associated with fevers greater than 101 and/or flu-like symptoms
- Foul-smelling vaginal discharge
- Excessive vaginal bleeding (see above section on vaginal bleeding)
- Swollen, red, painful area on your leg
- Chest pain
- Persistently painful urination or inability to urinate
- Worsening vaginal or rectal pain
- Crying and periods of sadness lasting longer than two weeks
- Tenderness of pubic bone, accompanied by frequency, urgency, and burning with urination.

These symptoms may indicate an infection of some type, which requires immediate medical care.

If you have questions about your infant, please call your pediatrician.