

POSTPARTUM CARE FOR MOTHER

Activity

It's really important for all new moms to have as much rest as possible in the first ten days to a month, and to spend lots of time with their new baby. Staying in a lying down position can help with healing the uterus in the correct position, helping a tear heal, and in general helping the mom to get back to a normal energy level. Many women feel much better after one or two days and might want to get up sooner, but trying to stay lying down a little bit longer will help overall healing come sooner. Normal **Eating and Drinking** will help with this also, especially drinking lots of fluids and eating iron-rich and protein-rich foods. You should eat to your appetite and drink as much as you want.

Bleeding

Lying down for the first week will also help postpartum bleeding to decrease sooner. All women will have bleeding like a heavy period for about 3 days after the birth, and then some bleeding for up to six weeks. You might need menstrual pads for about a month, but be sure to spend some time at night without a pad on (just lying on a towel or soaker pad) so that the skin around your vagina doesn't get irritated. Be sure to call a midwife if you have any of the following:

- Heavy bleeding enough to soak a large pad in 30 minutes and still bleeding
- Clots that are the size of an apricot or approaching the size of your fist
- If you feel dizzy and weak with more than minimal bleeding

Perineal Care

Keeping your bottom and your vulva clean and dry during the first week or so after a birth is really important for tissue healing, even if you do not have a perineal tear. There are herbs you can steep in hot water to make a 'tea' that you add to a sitz bath (a mini bath in the tub) or a regular bath that you sit down in. You can also use a peri-bottle with the diluted herb 'tea' in it to spray on your perineum while you are urinating. This will help with stinging the first day.

Emotional State

Having a baby is, for most woman and most couples, a very happy time! Right after the baby is born, often there are several days of being very excited about a new baby in the family and enjoyment of this little being. However, after a woman has a baby, it is normal for her to have emotional ups-and-downs, like in pregnancy. Crying or feeling sad is very common for short periods of time and can start at any time in the first six months. The important thing is to sleep when the baby is sleeping and to get emotional support from family and friends, as well as help with getting or making food, with baby care while you have a bath, or do something that feel good for yourself. Despite this, some women will have postpartum depression, which is usually evidenced by a woman who is crying all day every day or has no appetite or does not want to see or be with any other people, or who is having many anxiety producing thoughts about the baby, herself, or the family. Women with postpartum depression can be helped and it is really important for everyone around them to make sure they get help.

Temperature

Many women will have hot and cold sweats after they give birth. It is important to call your midwife if you have a true fever and/or any unusual pain in your breasts, perineum or belly (not like **Afterbirth Contractions** which are like mild-moderate labor contractions which come and go, particularly after a baby has nursed) or if you notice a “rotten-meat” or putrid smell to your vaginal bleeding.

Breasts

Part of the midwife’s role is to support breastfeeding and to help you with that at every visit in the first few weeks if you need it. Some women experience a red, hot area in one or both breasts that hurts to touch or when the baby feeds. Using warm compresses or cold green cabbage leaves, and making sure the breast is really empty with gentle massage can help to heal blocked ducts. If the breast is infected and the pain gets worse or you have a fever for more than 24 hours, then your midwife can help you with other treatments.

Please call your midwife if:

- * Your bleeding fully saturates a pad in half an hour
- * You have 3 or more blood clots the size of an apricot or larger
- * You have severe pain in abdomen or breasts
- * Temperature above 100.0
- * Strong or putrid smell of vaginal bleeding/discharge
- * Feelings of anxiety about the baby or severe mood swings that cannot be controlled