



## Postpartum Care

After delivery there are some things you should know about the postpartum period. This is the most exciting time of your life but can also be the most stressful time of your life

- You will be sore. This seems obvious, but often people believe they should recover faster than they do. If you have had a vaginal delivery plan on being gentle with voiding and stools. After voiding or bowel movements use a peri-bottle and blot with toilet paper or a wash cloth. Do not sit on donut pillows as it can cause dependent edema, but a soft pillow to sit on can help. Sitz baths of warm water only in a very clean tub can also help swelling and pain. If you have had a cesarean do not do any heavy lifting. The incision may be sore, full, and numb feeling for up to 1 year. This should improve over time, but can take a while. When going up stairs go slowly for pain, or even consider going up backwards. You will be tired. You will be tired, more than you can imagine. Do not feel guilty asking for help from family and friends. You should have a plan in place in case you need a break.
- Constipation may be common. With both vaginal deliveries and cesareans it can take up to 5 days to have a bowel movement. Use stool softeners and fiber agents as needed.
- Your legs will swell. You will get a lot of fluids in labor or with surgery and the fluid shifts of delivery cause this. It can take 2-3 weeks for this to resolve. Do not be concerned unless your fingers or face swell or if you get a headache that will not resolve with sleep or pain medication. If this occurs, please call the office or go to the ER
- Bleeding is normal and can last up to 8 weeks. It should get lighter over time. Everyone's bleeding is different and bleeding with every delivery can be different. Your first period after you deliver may have increased cramping and heavier bleeding. Bleeding and cramping might increase with breastfeeding. There may be an odor to the blood. Any questions related to bleeding should be addressed with the office.
- Breastfeeding is difficult. It can take a while to get the hang of it. Your nipples may be tender especially at the beginning. Use warm cloths during feeding if you are having difficulty emptying your breasts. Use lanolin, especially if you have cracking or bleeding nipples. If you have burning pain after feeding that radiates toward your back, red streaks that are tender, masses that do not go away after massage or warm compresses with feeding, fever 100.4 or greater call immediately. If you have low milk supply you can contact the office for a list of supplements and things to try. We also have a list of lactation consultants for you if needed.
- If you no longer want to breastfeed, use tight bras (one size too small) or an ace wrap tight, frozen peas/corn on your breasts, and cold cabbage leaves. It may take a couple of weeks to stop milk supply and your breasts will be engorged. Please contact the office to discuss further options as needed.
- Postpartum depression is nothing to be embarrassed about. It is common to have some "baby blues" in the first two weeks. If you are sad all day, crying frequently, unable to care for the baby, unable to function or interact with others, please make an appointment with us as soon as possible. We will fit you in. If you have any thoughts of hurting yourself or anyone else, or any thoughts that seem odd (such as extreme anxiety about minor things), either call the emergency line, make an emergency appointment with the office, or go to the ER. We know this is a stressful time, we are here to help.
- Your significant other will be stressed also. During this time arguments tend to increase. If you feel in danger, or you need counseling services, we can give you numbers for help.
- You will follow up in the office at 2 weeks post-partum and then as directed after, generally at 6 to 8 weeks after delivery.
- Birth control will often be desired after delivery. What birth control we will offer will depend on several different factors, such as breast feeding, desire for future pregnancies and even cultural considerations. We advise you abstain from intercourse until you are seen at your final post-partum. Know that the cervix is open and having intercourse puts you at increased risk of infection. Also, if you have not been abstinent starting contraception will be delayed.



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**We look forward to meeting your beautiful baby**