

# Postpartum Adjustment



The postpartum period is normally the 1st 6 weeks after your baby is born.

- Your body will go through many changes as it returns to normal.
- You will also have many different feelings at this time.

## Postpartum Nutrition

It is important to eat a healthy diet after you have your baby.

- It is best to eat many different kinds of food.
- Do not diet until after your 6-week checkup with your doctor.

## Getting Enough Rest

Rest is very important after the birth of your baby.

Here are some tips to prevent you from getting overtired:

- Take a nap when your baby is napping.
- Go to bed early and sleep in late whenever you can.
  - This will help you make up for the sleep you lose during nighttime feedings.
- Try not to have too many visitors during the 1st few weeks after your baby is born.
- Ask for help with cooking and household chores.
- Practice relaxing 1 or 2 times during the day.

## Tips for Taking Care of Yourself

### VAGINAL DISCHARGE

- For the 1st few days you will have a red discharge from your vagina.
- It will gradually get lighter in color and soon stop.
- Do not use tampons during this time.
- If the discharge increases in amount, turns bright red, or smells bad, call your doctor.

## AFTER BIRTH PAINS

- After you deliver your baby, you may notice cramping in your belly.
- This is your uterus shrinking back to normal size.
- If you have bad cramps, ask your doctor what you can take for the pain.

## EPISIOTOMY

- As your episiotomy heals, the stitches may feel sore and itchy.
- Keep the area around the stitches clean.
- Ask your doctor what you can do to ease the itching and soreness.

## URINATION

- You will urinate a lot during the 1st few days after your baby is born.
- This is how your body gets rid of the extra fluid you needed while you were pregnant.

## CONSTIPATION

- Increase the amount of fluids and fiber you take to help ease constipation.
- Maintain a mild amount of exercise.
- Drink at least 8, eight ounce glasses of liquid a day (include water, fruit juices, and milk).
- Eat high-fiber foods such as:
  - Fresh fruits (including peels)
  - Vegetables
  - Salads
  - Bran cereals
  - Whole-grain breads
  - Dried peas and beans
  - Prune juice
  - Prunes
  - Figs
- Do not take laxatives unless ordered by your doctor.

## BREAST AND NIPPLE TENDERNESS

Your breasts may feel full and heavy when your milk comes in on the 3rd to 5th day after your baby is born.

- Make sure you wear a bra with good support, even at night.
- If you are breast feeding, apply warm, moist compresses before nursing.
- If you are bottle feeding your baby, apply cold compresses.
- If you have a lot of pain, ask your doctor what you can take.

## The Baby Blues

- Your life will be very different once you bring your new baby home.
- Besides taking care of your body after you deliver your baby, you need to get used to being a new mother.
- The baby blues happen to many women in the days right after childbirth.
  - You may have sudden mood swings, such as feeling very happy and then feeling very sad.
  - You may cry for no reason.
  - You may feel impatient.
  - You may be irritable.
  - You may feel restless.
  - You may feel anxious.
  - You may feel lonely.
  - You may feel sad.
- The baby blues (postpartum blues) usually start within 3 days after the baby is born.
- They may last only a few hours or as long as 1 to 2 weeks after the baby is born.

The baby blues, also known as postpartum blues, usually start within 3 days of giving birth and may last only a few hours or as long as 1 to 2 weeks after delivery.

## Pregnancy Can Be Difficult

Caring for an infant is hard work.

- Even though you were ready for your baby to be born, this time may include some unexpected *highs* and *lows*.
- The baby blues are very common and affect about 70% to 85% of new moms.
- It will take time for you and your baby to adjust.
- Be patient.
- Accept support from family and friends.
- You may want to join a support group of new moms.
- The baby blues usually go away on their own.
- You may have postpartum depression if:
  - Your feelings of sadness do not go away after 2 weeks.
  - You are having a hard time taking care of yourself or your baby.
  - Call your doctor to get help if this happens to you.
  - Do not be embarrassed.
  - You are not alone, it is not your fault, and you will feel better.

## Postpartum Checkup

Taking care of yourself is just as important as taking care of your baby.

- Call your doctor and make an appointment for your postpartum checkup.
  - This should happen 4 to 6 weeks after your baby is born.
  - At this office visit, your doctor will ask how you are doing and check to make sure you are healing properly.
  - The doctor will check your weight and blood pressure.
  - If you had a cesarean, your stitches may be removed at this time.
  - Your doctor will do a pelvic exam to check that your uterus is returning to the size it was before your pregnancy.
  - The doctor will check that your bleeding has stopped.
  - The doctor will check to make sure your episiotomy or lacerations are healing.
  - A check for hemorrhoids will be done, and you will be asked if you have constipation.
  - The doctor will want to know if you leak urine when you cough or laugh.
  - If you are due for a Pap test, it can be done now.
  - Your doctor will check your breasts.
  - If you are breastfeeding, you will be asked how it is going.
  - The doctor will ask if you have nipple soreness or any other problems.
  - If you are bottlefeeding, the doctor will check that your breasts are no longer making milk.
  - This is a good time to talk to your doctor about the size family you want.
    - Do you want more children?
    - Have you decided not to have any more children?
    - This is a good time to talk about birth control methods.



## Baby Spacing

- Baby spacing is planning pregnancies with the best amount of time between births for the baby and the mother.
- The time between pregnancies is usually more than 18 months but less than 5 years.



- If the time between pregnancies is less than 18 months or more than 5 years, the 2nd baby has a higher risk for problems early in life.
- If you space your pregnancies too close together or too far apart you have more risk of:
  - Having your baby early.
  - Having a baby with a low birth weight.
  - This may be related to:
    - Not enough nutrition in the mother.
    - Lifestyle or psychological factors.

### Spacing your babies will:

- Increase the chance that your next baby will be born healthy.
- Give your body time to replace the nutrients used during pregnancy.
- Give you time to bond with the baby.
- Allow enough time for you to give each baby the attention they need.
- Reduce your stress level.
- Prevent exhaustion.
- Keep you from feeling overwhelmed.
- Give you a chance to adjust to the life changes that occur when you have a new baby.
- Help you plan your finances.
- Give you time to lose the weight you gained so you are healthy when you get pregnant again.

### Discuss this with your partner.

- Decide together when you want to get pregnant again.
- Talk with your doctor about any possible concerns you may have.

## Having Sex

Most doctors would like you to have a postpartum exam before you resume sexual intercourse.

- Usually, you must wait until your bleeding stops and your uterus is healed.
- It is very normal to not feel like having sex for several weeks after your baby is born.
- You will know when it feels right for you.
- You may be a little nervous, and it may be a little uncomfortable.
- Your vagina may need extra lubrication due to hormonal changes.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist for the best lubricant to use if you need one.
- Try different positions for comfort.

## Birth Control

- Remember, you **can** get pregnant again even if you are breastfeeding.
- There are many different kinds of birth control.
  - You can buy some forms of birth control at the drug store, including condoms, creams, and foams.
  - Your doctor must prescribe birth control pills, a diaphragm, or an IUD.
  - Some forms of birth control work better than others.
- Ask your doctor to help you choose a birth control method that is best for you. Follow the directions carefully and use it every time you have sex.



**NOTE: Birth control pills may be less effective when used with antibiotics. Talk with your doctor about alternative methods of birth control if you are taking antibiotics.**