



# Postpartum Instructions for Mom

Congratulations on the birth of your precious baby! Welcome to what we call the “fourth trimester.” This phase of your “new normal” will include many changes and possibly some challenges. We want to provide you with some guidelines and instructions to help you have a safe, healthy postpartum period.

**Rest:** Birth is hard work! Rest will help you recover more quickly. Stay in bed with your baby for the first week and do nothing except take care of yourself and your baby. Do not lift anything heavier than your baby. After the first week, you can gradually add back to your normal activities, but use wisdom. Sleep when your baby sleeps. Allow other people to prepare meals, do housework, do laundry, and care for older children. Taking care of yourself and the baby now will make it easier for you to resume a more normal schedule very soon.

**Perineal Care:** Use your peribottle filled with warm water to rinse your perineum while you are urinating and/or rinse your perineum after using the restroom. Pat dry (avoid wiping). Ice packs may be soothing and can help reduce pain and swelling. Wear them for 20-30 minutes every hour. If you have any kind of laceration, keep your legs together to help facilitate healing. sent you home with. It is important to gently keep clean and dry to promote healing. After the first 24 hours, warmth helps promote healing better than cold. Squirt witch hazel on a pad or use Tucks pads up against any sutures you may have.

**Nutrition and Hydration:** In addition to recovering from birth, your body is working to produce more colostrum and begin the transition to mature milk. Maintain your pregnancy diet and supplements, as well as ADD an additional 500 calories every day to your diet. Stay well hydrated and eat a healthy diet with a variety of fresh foods and plenty of healthy fats, whole grains, fruit and vegetables. Good nutrition will help you recover quickly and thoroughly. It takes more calories to make milk than to grow a baby.

**Uterus and bleeding:** Your uterus should be firm and no higher than your belly button. Expect heavy period type bleeding for the first 12-24 hours. It will gradually slow down and become darker in color and less in amount over the next 2-3 weeks. You may have clots, especially after you’ve been laying down. You should not soak more than 1 pad

## WHEN TO CALL YOUR MIDWIFE:

- If you soak 2 pads in ONE hour.
- If you pass a clot larger than your fist.
- If you bleeding has a foul odor.
- If you have any uterine tenderness.

per hour. If you are bleeding too much, do 3 things, all starting with “B” . . . rub your “belly”; empty your “bladder”, “breastfeed” your baby. If you fill a menstrual pad in less than 20 minutes, or if you have gushing blood that seems like a hemorrhage, call 911, lay down, rub your belly, and breastfeed your baby until help arrives.

**Afterbirth Pains:** Some women, especially after their second or more babies, will experience cramping for the first few days after birth. As your uterus shrinks down to its pre-pregnant size, you may notice that they feel like menstrual cramps. Here are some options to help alleviate the pain and discomfort: hot water bottle or heating pad, extra calcium with magnesium, ibuprofen every four hours, Afterease, Crampbark tincture or tea.

**Elimination:** Your bladder may feel numb for about the first 24 hours after birth. Make a habit of attempting to empty your bladder every 2 hours, even if you don’t feel the urge. Keeping your bladder empty will minimize postpartum bleeding and cramping. Let me know if you have any difficulty urinating or having a bowel movement.



**Pain Relief:** The first choice for pain relief is ice for the perineum. Over the counter remedies may be helpful for hemorrhoid relief. Frozen bags of peas work well for ice packs on your breasts if they are sore. Afterease and/or Arnica are excellent supplements to have on hand should your afterpains be stronger than you are expecting. Ibuprofen may help with both pain relief and swelling. Tylenol may help with pain relief and is generally considered safe.

**Breast Care:** Do not use alcohol, soap, or drying agents on the nipples. If your nipples are sore or breastfeeding is painful, it may be a sign of poor positioning or an ineffective latch. Use pure lanolin cream or a pure healing salve on your nipples after each feeding if you are sore. Call me so we can help troubleshoot solutions.

Breastfeeding may be uncomfortable for the first several days, but it should not be extremely painful for any extended period of time.

**Exercise:** While you are in bed for these first few days, be sure to do what we call “airplane exercises” to support the circulation of your legs. “Write” the ABCs with your feet and shift positions often to encourage good circulation. After 6 weeks, you may resume some physical exercise. Begin with walking and gradually increase your activities, slowly resuming your normal routine.

**Postpartum Blues:** It is not uncommon for new mothers to experience feelings of depression or sadness. These feelings are known as “baby blues”. You may feel like crying “for no reason” and feel exhausted or overwhelmed. Make sure you are getting plenty of rest, a lot of support, and nurturing from your partner and other loved ones, and get as much sleep as you can. You should feel like “your old self” within a week or 2. In some cases, the feelings of depression or sadness are more severe and continue for more than 2 weeks. And, sometimes, the thoughts and emotions new mothers have can be more serious and may be an indication of postpartum depression. If you or your family are concerned that you are not enjoying motherhood or you are feeling angrier or sadder than normal, please call me and let me know.

**Birth Control & Intercourse:** Do not resume sexual intercourse until your bleeding has stopped and you feel ready. It is important to wait until your body has had time to heal before introducing anything into the vagina. When you are ready to resume an intimate relationship, please consider your contraceptive options, take it slow, and you may need to use a lubricant. Breastfeeding is not an entirely effective method of birth control. Many couples choose barrier methods. Some choose prescriptions. I would be glad to discuss these options with you. It is possible to ovulate within 4-6 weeks after birth – even while breastfeeding!

**Welcome to Motherhood:** Remember to slow down. Enjoy this time with your baby. Nursing and cuddling your baby will help both you and the baby move into this beautiful new relationship together.

Call us if:

- You or your baby runs a fever over 100.4\* F.
- Your baby turns yellow in the first 24 hours.
- Your baby’s mouth, lips, or trunk turns blue.
- You have any questions or concerns.

**In case of an emergency, call 911.**

#### WHEN TO CALL YOUR MIDWIFE:

- If you have any red spots or tender areas on your breast(s)
- If you run a fever over 100.4
- If you have any chills, faint, or dizzy.

