

Your Postpartum Recovery

Early Postpartum Period



Whether you birth in a hospital, birth suite, at home, or elsewhere, it is important that you and your healthcare providers monitor your physical condition to ensure that there are no post-birth complications. After you return home, it is equally as important to monitor your physical and emotional health and to inform your healthcare provider as soon as possible should any problems arise.

About Your Uterus:

- In the 6-weeks post-birth, the uterus returns to its pre-pregnancy size.
- Soon after birth, your healthcare provider might use fundal massage to stimulate the uterus to contract. This helps keep the uterus firm and prevents heavy blood loss.
- You may experience afterpains - pain/discomfort as the uterus contracts. Afterpains increase with each birth and typically disappear 1 week postpartum.
- Ibuprofen is typically prescribed for afterpains. You can consult with your healthcare provider immediately postpartum.

Menstruation typically resumes 4 to 8 weeks postpartum

- and can be (but is not always) delayed by breastfeeding.


Your first few cycles may be heavier and longer than usual


- OR lighter and shorter than usual. They will return to normal eventually.


**Optimal recovery requires rest!
Don't be afraid to set boundaries,
ask for help and/or consider hiring
a Postpartum Doula!**

Postpartum Bleeding

The total volume of postpartum "lochia" is typically between 200-500 ml and can last from 3-6 weeks.

 Lochia Rubra - Lasts 3 to 4 Days. Like a heavy menstrual period. May have small clots. Smells fleshy like menstrual blood.

 Lochia Serosa - Last 4 to 10 Days. Moderate to a small amount. *Overactivity and stress can increase flow/change from Serosa back to Rubra.

 Lochia Alba - Last 10 to 28 days. Small amount of creamy/white-ish discharge gradually disappears.

Perineal Care Tips:

Your perineum needs special care as it may be bruised and swollen. You may also have had stitches due to a tear or episiotomy. Here are some helpful tips to help!

- Ice packs or "pad-sicles" can help reduce swelling.
- After (or even during) urination, use a per-bottle to clean yourself with warm water. Be sure to spray front to back to avoid infection from bacteria around the rectal area. Pat, don't wipe yourself dry also front to back.
- If you are struggling to relax in order to urinate, putting a drop or two of peppermint oil in the toilet before can stimulate the right muscles to relax making it easier to urinate.
- You may be constipated or have fear around having a bowel movement post-birth. A stool softener (NOT a laxative) can help.
- Drink lots of water and eat lots of fresh and dried fruits/veggies to prevent constipation.
- It is common to develop hemorrhoids post-birth. Most will disappear 1 month postpartum. Witch hazel, sitz baths and avoiding heavy lifting and constipation can help!
- Do not use tampons before your postpartum follow-up with your healthcare provider.
- Do not use Douche products.
- Sitz baths can help reduce soreness, If you have had a cesarean be sure to follow your provider's instructions regarding baths.
- A doughnut pillow or rolled-up towel shaped into a circle can help take the pressure off your perineum while sitting.
- Sitting on a firm surface may feel more comfortable if you have stitches.
- Rest/lay down as much as you can in the first 6 weeks postpartum. When sitting and standing, gravity can increase swelling and cause pelvic floor ache/pain.

Serious Postpartum Warning Signs

In the days and weeks following birth, it is important that you continue to monitor your physical postpartum recovery. If you experience any of these warning signs, report them to your trusted healthcare provider as soon as possible.

- Fever (oral or temporal temperature of 100.0 degrees F / 38 degrees C or higher)
- Burning with urination
- Blood in urine
- Inability to urinate
- Swollen, red, painful area on the leg (especially in your calf) that is hot/tender to the touch
- Sore, red, hot, painful area on the breast/chest tissue with flu-like symptoms
- Passing a blood clot larger than a lemon followed by heavy bleeding OR bleeding that soaks a pad within 1 hour or less.
- Foul-smelling vaginal discharge (like rotten fish)
- Vaginal itching or soreness
- Increased pain around episiotomy/stitches site (may be accompanied by pus-like discharge or blood)
- Cesarean Incision opening (may be accompanied by pus-like discharge or blood)
- Rash or hives (itchy or not)
- Severe headache that is worse when upright and less painful when laying down
- New sudden onset of pain such as abdominal tenderness or burning near perineal stitches when urinating
- Pain/tenderness in front or back of your pelvis (may be accompanied by difficulty walking and/or a "grating" sensation in your pubic joint)
- Feeling extremely anxious, panicky or depressed accompanied by rapid heart rate, difficulty breathing, uncontrollable crying, feelings of anger, or inability to sleep/eat.
- Not feeling safe in your relationship with your partner (if you have one); being verbally/physically abused.

If you have ANY concerns or worries about your or your baby's health after birth, don't be afraid to call your trusted healthcare provider!

Family Dr. : _____

OB/GYN or Midwife: _____

Health Link/Public Health: _____