



HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AT HOME AFTER DELIVERY

ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISE

Remember the changes in your body occurred over many months. Regardless of what you do, you won't get your figure back overnight so be patient and take it slowly. The following tips should help you know when and how to resume your pre-pregnancy activities.

- During the first 4 to 6 weeks, slowly increase your activity level as you feel stronger.
- Do not lift anything that weights more than about ten pounds because your stomach muscles are weak right now. If you have children, try comforting them by squatting with them or holding them in your lap.
- You may use the stairs, but avoid taking frequent trips and take your time.
- Do exercises to help restore your vaginal muscles. Squeeze your muscles as if you were trying to stop a stream of urine and hold it for 10 to 30 seconds. Do this 10 times a day.
- Walk. It is one of the best ways to get back in shape.
- Hold off on driving for about 1 to 2 weeks or until it is no longer painful to press on the accelerator.
- For other questions about exercise, please consult your healthcare provider.

HEALTHY EATING

Good eating habits will help you to feel better as well as lose any extra weight.

- Choose a variety of foods, such as fish, fruit, vegetables, breads and cereals.
- Avoid high-calorie, low nutrition and fatty foods such as donuts, candy, sodas and fried foods.
- Remember to take your vitamins and iron as prescribed.
- Drink lots of fluids especially water and juice.
- Eat plenty of fresh fruits (apples, oranges, bananas, grapes, etc.) and vegetables and fiber such as bran and cereals.

Avoid any weight reduction efforts until first checking with your healthcare provider.

PERSONAL CARE

As you heal, the vaginal discharge you now have should change from bright red to pink, to brown, and finally back to normal. This should take 4 to 6 weeks. The following steps will help to avoid getting an infection.

- Take a shower or sponge bath daily. Gently clean your vaginal area.
- When you use the bathroom, be sure to wipe yourself front to back (one wipe for each tissue).
- Change your pad at least every 4 hours or more often if needed.
- Do not use tampons and douches until after your 6 week check-up.

TAKE CARE

Your Episiotomy Stitches: Episiotomy stitches do not need to be removed, they will dissolve over time. Healing usually takes place within four weeks. During this time you may notice tightness and itching. To help relieve the pain, continue to use the methods you learned in the hospital. Having a bowel movement will not tear or loosen your stitches. If your episiotomy becomes more painful, contact your healthcare provider.

Your Cesarean Stitches: Your incision was closed with either stitches or staples. Both are strong and will not pull apart with coughing, walking or standing up straight. When you shower, be sure to dry the incision area well. Staples will be removed in the first week after surgery. Stitches will dissolve over time.

Remember that a Cesarean is a major surgery. You will have some pain during recovery. For several weeks, you will probably have less energy than usual. Get as much help as you can with the housework.

BREAST CARE

- Wear a tight-fitting support bra at all times, even to bed, for 2 weeks. Pressure on your breasts by binding them with a 6-inch wide ace bandage may also help.
- When you are in the shower, avoid letting the warm water spray on your breasts.
- Do not squeeze milk from your nipples. Breast stimulation encourages your body to make more.
- If your breasts become hard, tight and sore, place ice packs on them for 15 minutes at a time. Try this 3 or 4 times a day or as needed for comfort.

ONCE YOU ARE HOME

You are suddenly dealing with changing emotions, changing hormones and you are also very tired. The following tips may help you adjust once you are back home.

- Remember that mood changes are normal.
- Have a good cry.
- Talk to someone who can give you the love and attention you need.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Ask your family and friends to help you at home.
- Get out of the house and take a short walk in the fresh air.
- Take a shower or leisurely bath.
- Be good to yourself.
- If you still are having trouble adjusting at your 6 week check-up talk to your healthcare provider.

LOVE MAKING

It is only natural that there may be some changes in your sex life after delivery. Your body has made changes and you may feel tired. Be patient and give yourself some time. We encourage you to wait 4-6 weeks before having sex. Many women find that vaginal tightness and dryness make sex uncomfortable. Using a vaginal gel, such as Astroglide or K-Y jelly, may be helpful. If sex continues to be uncomfortable or painful speak to your healthcare provider.

BIRTH CONTROL

Your ovaries start working soon after delivery. Your normal monthly period will return in four to ten weeks. When your ovaries begin working, you can get pregnant. This means you can get pregnant right away. If you want to prevent pregnancy, you should choose a form of birth control before you leave the hospital.

Remember that condoms help stop the spread of diseases. Safer sex lessens your risk of exposure to the virus that causes AIDS and to other sexually transmitted diseases.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

If you notice any of the following conditions, contact your healthcare provider.

- Passing egg-sized clots or an increase in your bleeding that soaks through a pad in an hour.
- Strong odor to your discharge.
- Increased pain.
- Fever above 100.4F or 38.0C.
- If your feelings of sadness lasts longer than 6 weeks.
- An urge to harm yourself.

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