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## Postpartum Instructions and Warnings

Congratulations on your new baby! You are approaching the birth and we are going to describe what you may experience in the weeks following your delivery. We are giving this to you prior to your delivery so we may answer any questions or concerns you may have.

### **Things to bring with you to the hospital**

Have your bag packed and ready to go between 34-36 weeks.

- Birthing plan – top 10 things you *do not* want for your delivery experience
- Toiletries (toothbrush/toothpaste, shampoo/conditioner, deodorant, comb/brush, hair tie, makeup, chapstick, etc.)
- Glasses or contact lenses (contact case and solution)
- Change of clothes and clothes to wear home
- Pajamas or lounge pants
- Nursing bras
- Pillow/blanket
- Slippers/socks and robe
- Books, magazines
- Camera, video recorder
- CD's, iPod, iPad or tablet, Laptop
- Outfit for the baby

### **What to Expect**

#### **Vaginal Bleeding**

Vaginal bleeding is common for up to 6 weeks after the delivery, even if you do not have a vaginal birth. The first week will be like a period and will taper down to pinkish or brown discharge. Bleeding may stop completely and return bright red within the 6 week time frame. If you soak through more than one pad in an hour, a provider should be notified. Some small blood clots can be expected. Please notify the office if you are passing clots larger than a golf ball.

#### **Breast Feeding & Breast Changes**

Your breast milk will come in postpartum on day 3 or 4, regardless if you are nursing or not. You can expect engorgement with some discomfort when this occurs. You may also experience some flu-like symptoms and a low grade temperature. Ibuprofen is recommended for these symptoms and discomfort. If you are nursing, have the baby feed every 2-3 hours. If not nursing, wear a tight sports bra, avoid heat to breasts, and use cold compresses such as bags of frozen vegetables or cabbage leaves. Expect the discomfort to resolve within 24-48 hours, if not nursing, as the milk supply diminishes. You may purchase or rent a breast pump prior to the delivery and bring it with you to the hospital. The lactation consultant at the hospital can assist you in using the new pump. It is also useful to be prepared with lanolin cream, breast pads, and a nursing bra.

#### **Mood Changes**

There are times when some women may experience anxiety, inability to sleep, or feelings of being overwhelmed. Postpartum blues may occur in the first 2 weeks after delivery. During this time, you may experience weepiness, crying (despite feeling joy), and emotions running up and down. This typically resolves by the second week. If you feel your moods are not stable or you are having thoughts that are bothering you or your family members, please call a provider to discuss postpartum depression or anxiety.

#### **Body Changes**

You will experience mild swelling of your feet, increased urination, and sweating as your body flushes the increased fluids that were present during pregnancy. This should resolve within the first 2 weeks. You may experience constipation. This will make the healing process more difficult. You can take a stool softener to decrease any constipation. Burning with urination and increased frequency of urination may indicate a urinary tract infection/bladder infection. Please call a provider if you experience any of these symptoms.

Be careful getting in and out of the car and the bed. Your abdominal muscles are healing and are weak. Do not lift anything heavier than your baby. Nothing is to be placed in the vagina for the first 6 weeks.



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## **Postpartum Care**

### **Wound Care**

If you had a tear or episiotomy, you can soak in a tub with Epsom salts. Place 1-2 cups in a warm bath and soak for 10-15 minutes. Use a spray bottle to rinse yourself off after using the restroom to decrease pain and swelling. Showering is also okay to do. Keep the vaginal area clean and dry for optimal healing. Notify a provider if you have redness, increased pain, or drainage/pus from the incision site. Also, notify the office if you develop a fever as these are signs of a possible infection.

If you had a cesarean section, keep the incision clean and dry. Check the incision throughout the day for redness, swelling, warmth, and oozing/drainage of pus or fluid. Notify a provider if any of these symptoms occur or you develop a fever. Tape is placed over the incision to help enforce the healing process. You may shower and get the tape wet. Do not remove the tape on your own. It will peel off on its own, or it will be removed at your first postpartum visit 10-14 days after delivery. Wearing an abdominal binder may help with support. You can also use a heating pad during the first week to relieve discomfort.

### **Warning Signs**

If you experience any of these symptoms, notify the office immediately:

- Bleeding heavier than one pad per hour or passage of blood clots larger than a golf ball
- Temperature of 100.4°F or greater
- Pain that is not resolving with medication and/or other comfort measures
- Pus or foul smelling discharge, bleeding, warmth, change in color around the incision site (abdominal or perineum)
- Redness of the breast, warmth, severe breast pain, or clogged ducts that are not responding to heat and massage
- Depression, difficulty caring for your baby or yourself, or any thoughts of hurting yourself or your baby
- Burning or increased frequency of urination

### **Restrictions for Vaginal Deliveries**

- No driving for 2 weeks following the delivery
- Nothing in the vagina for 6 weeks, including having intercourse
- No lifting anything heavier than your baby for the first 2 weeks
- No exercises until you are cleared by a provider after 6 weeks. Light walking is okay after the first 2 weeks.

### **Restrictions for Cesarean Deliveries**

- No driving for 4 weeks following the delivery
- Nothing in the vagina for 6 weeks, including having intercourse
- No lifting anything heavier than your baby for the first 4 weeks
- Limit the use of stairs at home to 1-2 times per day for the first week
- No exercises until you are cleared by a provider after 6 weeks. No abdominal exercise for 12 weeks. Light walking is okay after the first 2 weeks.
- Incision may get wet with soap and water in the shower. Make sure the incision is completely dry after showering. You may use a blow dryer on the cool setting if necessary.
- Keep the incision open to the air from time to time to promote the healing process
- You may massage Neosporin with lidocaine, Mederma cream, or other anti-scar creams on the incision after the second week.