

When Can I have Sex Again –

Most health care workers advise waiting at least six weeks before having sex. At your first checkup after having your baby, discuss birth control methods with your health care provider.

How Can I Cope With Change –

A baby brings lots of changes for all members of the family. A baby's brothers, sisters and your partner may become jealous. They can resent the time you spend with the baby. Young children may want more attention and go back to actions like wetting the bed, wanting diapers, the bottle and to be fed. These actions are normal. Try setting aside some time each day, even if short, to make the other children feel special and loved. Your partner may fear hurting you during sex. Talking about these changes is helpful.

What About my Feelings? –

Some women have times of highs and lows, or a "blue" feeling after having a baby. You may not be able to find a cause. The "blues" often appear between the third and tenth day after having a baby. But they can appear at any time. You may cry, be crabby, feel "not quite with it" or "slow." These feelings may come and go and/or may last a period of time. Being tired, changing hormones, and concern for the baby can all cause

these feelings. If they last for several days or you become concerned about yourself, contact your health care provider.

What are some General Tips?

- ◆ Eat healthy meals using the Food Guide Pyramid
- ◆ Drink plenty of water, milk and juice
- ◆ Use paper plates for awhile
- ◆ Rest – nap when baby naps
- ◆ Don't worry if your house is not clean
- ◆ Take the phone off the hook
- ◆ Plan some time away for yourself or for you and your partner
- ◆ Prepare meals before having the baby
- ◆ Accept help when it is offered
- ◆ If breastfeeding, avoid alcohol and ask your health care provider before taking medicines
- ◆ Avoid smoking in the rooms with the baby

THE NATIONAL HOTLINE FOR
"DEPRESSION AFTER DELIVERY" IS:
1-800-944-4773



Taking Care of Yourself After Having a Baby



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Congratulations!

Congratulations on the birth of your baby. While you are caring for your new baby, you will also be caring for yourself.

You have already been through a lot of changes while you were pregnant. This pamphlet is meant as a resource for you about changes in your body after having a baby and how to care for yourself. If you believe you have a health problem, contact your health care provider right away.

Is Heavy Bleeding Normal? –

This flow from your vagina is normal and means you are healing. When you get up (the first time after lying in bed), you may have a gush of blood. At first, your flow is a dark red and may be heavy. This flow will slowly become a lighter color and decrease in amount in 1 to 3 weeks after the birth of your baby. If you breastfeed, your flow may increase slightly during this time. If you are too active, you may notice an increase in your flow or a change in the color of your flow to dark red. Then you need to rest for a day. If these changes go on for more than a day or if you notice a fever over 100 degrees, passing clots or clumps of blood, or increased discharge with a bad odor – you will need to call your health care provider.

Why does my Bottom Hurt? –

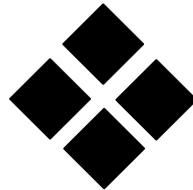
If you are sore from tears or an episiotomy (the cut made in your vagina to ease having a baby), soak in a tub of warm water 2 to 4 times a day. Exercising the muscles of the vagina can also speed healing using “Kegel” Exercises.

“Kegel” Exercises

The muscles you use when urinating are stretched when having a baby. By exercising them you can lessen discomfort, improve support to the organs above this area, and improve control of your bladder.

Tighten the muscles around the vagina as if you are trying to stop the flow of urine – hold for 10 seconds and release slowly.

Tighten 10 times in a row.
Exercise 5 – 10 times a day
Keep this habit for the rest of your life.



How do I Take Care of my

Episiotomy? – Stitches used to repair your episiotomy do not have to be taken out. When the stitches dissolve, you may notice a piece of thread in your panties or on your toilet tissue.

Do not wipe the area of the episiotomy. Rinse with clear warm water or blot dry. Blot the area of the episiotomy from front to the back with clean toilet tissue. Check with your health care provider to see if some medicine may be taken for the soreness.

How do I

Take Care of my Breasts? –

- **If I am Breastfeeding** – Use only water to clean the breasts and nipples. Avoid soap or creams that contain alcohol. Wear a clean, well fitting bra day and night. Avoid plastic liners and nipple shields. Allow your breasts to air dry for 10 to 15 minutes after each feeding. You may have fullness in your breasts between the second and fourth day after having a baby – this is normal. You can ease this by breastfeeding every one to two hours on baby’s demand even through the night hours. Sore nipples are also normal for the first 5 to 10 days. If your breasts become very full and painful – try warm moist packs. If you have any concerns or questions about the care of your breasts and nipples, contact your health care provider.

- **If I am Bottle Feeding** – Wear a clean well fitting bra day and night. Ice packs may be used four times a day for no more than fifteen minutes at a time. Do not empty the breasts by pumping or massage as this makes more milk come in. Avoid warm water on the breasts.

What about Bowel Movements?–

To return to regular bowel habits, drink plenty of water, juice, and milk, and eat foods like whole grains, raw fruits, and vegetables. Also avoid laxatives that can work too strongly and could affect breastfed babies.

When will I

get my First Period? –

If you are breastfeeding, your period may take some months to return. This can depend on how long and how much you breastfeed. If you are bottle-feeding your baby, your periods may return in 4 to 8 weeks. Your periods might be heavier and last longer than before having your baby. You may be able to become pregnant before your first period. Before you start having sex and if you do not want to become pregnant, use birth control.

