

POSTPARTUM GUIDELINES FOR NEW MOTHERS

Congratulations . . . you're a Mom!

Thank you for choosing our Capital Women's Care office for your prenatal care and delivery. While in the hospital you will receive information from nurses, pediatricians, lactation and hearing consultants about your new baby.

. . . the following information is FOR YOU to promote your recuperation. We want to empower you to be the best Mom you can be.

ACTIVITY: Your new baby will make many demands on your time and energy. Sleep deprivation impacts both your energy and emotional state.

- Prioritizing for sleep and time with the baby are more important than usual routines and social interactions.
- Limits should be set for visitors to enable you to rest.

DRIVING is permitted when you can sit comfortably and not be distracted by pain.

- If you require narcotic strength medication for pain, it is not advisable to drive.
- You should ask for help from friends and family.

STAIRS should be negotiated slowly at first. Use the hand rail.

- DO NOT carry the baby the first few times up and down.
- To avoid falls, do not wear slippery soled shoes or slippers, socks or hose. Non-slip soles are safer.

COMMON SENSE can prevail and you should make good choices about driving, stairs, return to employment and exercising.

- (After a C Section, avoid abdominal exercises for 2-4 weeks)
- Return to your previous level of fitness should be gradual and you need to make good choices for you and your body. You just had a baby!

CARE OF STITCHES OR INCISION. Repaired areas may continue to be sore for a few days to a few weeks.

- It is not uncommon to notice additional soreness or swelling at the end of the day or to require more pain medication in the evening.
- An incision may become crusted or have more drainage of clear fluid. There could be an occasional drop of bright blood.
- It is fine to clean an abdominal incision with peroxide or a 50 / 50 mixture of peroxide and water. Use a sterile cotton ball or Q-tip for an abdominal incision and a spray bottle for vaginal area.
- When bathing, repaired areas may be washed with soap and water.
- You may notice changes in an abdominal incision over an entire year.

- Some itching is common.
- You can use Aquaphor or petroleum jelly to soften and gently massage an abdominal incision after 4-6 weeks.

BATHING You may shower or wash your hair at any time. Tub baths should wait about 2 weeks or until you can comfortably lift yourself in and out of the tub.

DIET The same diet that was recommended during your pregnancy is still a good one, especially if you were diagnosed with diabetes.

- Minimizing refined sugars, high fat and junk food will help in weight control.
- Breast feeding Moms
 - should have 3-4 servings of protein each day: meat, milk, fish, eggs and soy products.
 - Be sure to drink several glasses of water each day in addition to other liquids.
 - Breastfeeding Moms should be aware that some babies will have difficulty processing some of your food choices. For example, gas-forming foods like beans or cabbage may cause your baby to be gassy. Chocolate may cause constipation. Highly seasoned foods, caffeine or diet sodas have been known to cause irritability in the baby. Surprisingly, some babies are colicky if Mom consumes dairy products.
 - Lactation consumes calories and helps breastfeeding Moms lose weight.

Both lactating and bottle feeding mothers can safely work with Weight Watchers, listed in the phone book and online/

VITAMINS We recommend using the remainder of your prenatal vitamins. When they are gone, if you are still breastfeeding, you **SHOULD** get a non-prescription multivitamin at any drugstore, grocery or health product store. The blood count obtained at delivery will guide your need for additional iron. If need a good non-prescription source of iron is Vitron_C.

BOWEL MOVEMENTS To reestablish regular bowel movements,

- we recommend a bowl of bran, oatmeal or other high fiber cereal daily.
- Salads, fruit, fruit juices and a minimum of 3 8-ounce glasses of water a day are highly recommended
- If additional help is needed, stool softeners such as Metamucil, Colace, Dialose, Fibercon, Citrucel and Miralax are available without a prescription. Fiber One products and prunes and prune juice may be helpful
- You should try to have a bowel movement at least every 2-3 days after discharge from the hospital. Watch for laxative signs in your baby.

BLEEDING The bleeding pattern varies tremendously from person to person. Some may only have spotting; others have bleeding like a light period or bloody discharge. Small clots are not unusual. The material coming from the vagina may range in color from yellow to pink to brown to red.

- PADS ARE TO BE USED RATHER THAN TAMPONS.

Bleeding may continue for several weeks.

- Bottle feeding Mothers will usually experience a first period in 6-8 weeks.
- For breastfeeding Mothers, there may be no identifiable period for months or as long as you continue to breastfeed.

You should call the doctor if bleeding is persistently heavier than a period, if blood has a strong, unpleasant odor or if you have a temperature of more than 100.4 degrees.

REPAIRED AREAS If there are stitches in or around the vagina, they will dissolve on their own in 2-3 weeks. Sitz baths or a squirt bottle used 2-3 times a day can help with cleanliness and alleviate discomfort.

- An episiotomy may be washed with soap and water while bathing.

- If there is an abdominal incision with skin staples, these may be removed before you are discharged from the hospital or you may be instructed to make an appointment for removal in the office.
 - Strips of tape on an abdominal incision should be removed, by you, about 1 week from the birth.

HEMORRHOIDS Hot soaks, witch hazel applied with cotton balls, and stool softeners are very helpful. Suppositories, available at the drug store, may also give relief.

THE BLUES Some new mothers unexpectedly get depressed and weepy during the first few weeks after delivery.

- Fatigue and dramatic hormone changes that occur with delivery and lactation contribute to this.
- Some new mothers may feel anxious about caring for a new baby, exhausted from interrupted sleep, burdened by increased levels of responsibility and concerned about changing relationships with their partner
- Such strong feelings can be emotionally draining and may cause guilt or ambivalence in a new mother.

Usually, things stabilize within 2 months and motherhood becomes a richly satisfying experience. If your feelings or emotions seem to be out of control, or if you need reassurance, please call our office.

TRAVEL We feel you should avoid long trips, that is, being more than an hour away from the hospital, for at least a month. If delayed or unexpected heavy bleeding occurs, we prefer you be close to familiar medical care.

CARE OF THE BREASTS

If breastfeeding, a lanolin containing cream or other products for breast care may be used. Before feeding, washing the nipple with plain water, then drying is recommended.

- A supportive bra is also recommended.
- If there are firm areas that develop in the breast, these areas should be massaged towards the nipple as the baby feeds. If possible nurse from both breasts at each feeding.
- **Call us immediately if an area of the breast feels hot, tender, red and swollen, with fever.**

If bottle feeding,

- wear a firm support bra, even while sleeping, until there is no leakage from the nipples.
- Apply ice packs to tender areas.
- Use over the counter pain relief such as Tylenol, Advil or Aleve.
- Stimulation of the breast, even the force of the shower or sexual stimulation, can cause milk to continue to appear in the breast. Please avoid squeezing the breast to see if milk is still present since this may cause you to produce more milk.
- There is currently no medication available to dry up breast milk once it appears.

SEXUAL RELATIONS

- We recommend that intercourse not be resumed until after your postpartum visit at the office.
- If you choose to resume sexual activity sooner, please wait a minimum of 3 weeks and use a contraceptive such as condoms.

- When sexual relations are resumed, the vagina may be quite dry.

- The dryness is largely hormonal and lasts longer in mothers who breast feed.
- To prevent pain from vaginal dryness, it is recommend to buy an over the counter lubricant such as KY liquid or Astoglide.
- Some sexual positions may be more comfortable than others.
- If you plan to use birth control pills and are not breastfeeding, the pill can be started just after you leave the hospital.
- A progestin only pill is available for lactating mothers and is usually prescribed at your postpartum office visit.

Please be prepared to discuss contraception at your post partum visit.

Permanent sterilization can also be discussed at that visit if you plan to make this your final pregnancy.

FOLLOW UP Please call the office to set up an appointment for a postpartum visit.

- This visit is 6 weeks after a vaginal delivery and 4 weeks after a C Section.
- To assure a convenient appointment time, please call to schedule your post partum visit soon after you leave the hospital.

Please remember to call us if you have

- excessive pain
- a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees
- bleeding persistently heavier than a period
- painful urination or
- anything that appears unusual to you in your abdominal incision.

We are honored and pleased to have participated in this important life event. Congratulations, again, on the birth of your child. We look forward to providing you with ongoing care and sharing many healthy years to come.

Drs Levitt, Berger-Weiss, Potts, Powell, Levenson and Lauren Burns, WHNP

Additional information can be found [LINK](#) PT ED Birth Control Options After Delivery, Contraception comparison Chart