

Ob-Gyne Associates of Libertyville

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Instructions for Patients After A Vaginal Delivery

Congratulations on your new arrival! Here are a few things to keep in mind when you are discharged from the hospital.

What does postpartum mean?

Postpartum is the period of time after the birth of your baby when your body is changing back to normal. It lasts about 6 weeks or until your uterus and other organs return to their normal size.

What special care will I need after delivery?

Rest:

- You will need extra rest. However, with caring for and feeding a new baby, there is not much time to rest. Get help from friends and family members with household chores so you will have extra time to care for the baby and yourself. Because you must feed the baby day and night, you may need to change your sleeping schedule to get enough rest. Try to sleep or nap while the baby sleeps. Morning and afternoon naps can be very helpful.

Pain Medications:

- Ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin) 600 mg every 6 hours as needed. This dosage is the same as taking 3 over-the-counter (200mg) ibuprofen tablets.
- If you had pain in the hospital requiring Darvocet or Vicodin (narcotic pain medications), please ask the doctor for a prescription. Most likely, you will need these stronger medications only for a few days at home, and the ibuprofen should suffice thereafter.
- You may also take acetaminophen (Tylenol), but do not combine Tylenol with Darvocet or Vicodin, because these medications already contain acetaminophen. You may alternate the ibuprofen with Darvocet/Vicodin.

Other Supplements:

- Continue your prenatal vitamins at home until your 6 week visit or until you run out. If you are nursing, continue your prenatal vitamin until you stop nursing.
- We will check a blood count after your delivery to determine if you are anemic. If you are anemic, we will often recommend an iron supplement to take at home in addition to your prenatal vitamin during the postpartum period. Most over the counter iron supplements (such as Slow Fe) will suffice.
- All women should get 1000-1200 mg of calcium daily. This is especially important if you are breastfeeding.

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Bleeding and discharge:

- You will continue to have vaginal bleeding and discharge after your delivery for 2 to 6 weeks. Sometimes it may last even longer. It may come out in gushes at times or more evenly like a period. The discharge will start out red and slowly taper off until it becomes pink and finally a yellow-white color. Do not use tampons for the first six weeks after delivery. Tampons may introduce bacteria into your body while it is still healing and cause an infection.

Constipation and hemorrhoids:

- It is common to be constipated or have discomfort from hemorrhoids after delivery. You can use over-the-counter hemorrhoid ointments and creams (e.g., Preparation H or Anusol) as well as witch hazel pads (e.g., Tucks) to help reduce swelling and pain in the rectal area.
- Increase water intake and increase the fiber in your diet. You may consider using an over-the-counter stool softener, such as docusate sodium (Colace) to help keep your stools soft. Do not use a laxative without consulting the doctor.

When can I start doing normal activities?

Exercise:

- You need to avoid heavy lifting or strenuous activity (including housework) for approximately 6 weeks, until you are cleared by the physician at your postpartum visit.
- You may gradually increase daily activity, including walking, as you start to feel better.

Driving:

- You should avoid driving a motor vehicle for about a week after delivery. The discomfort from the delivery as well as pain medications you may be taking can cause fatigue and increase your risks while driving.

Sex:

- You should abstain from intercourse for approximately 6 weeks after delivery. It takes approximately 6 weeks for your uterus to return to normal size, and we advise that you wait until after your six-week postpartum visit before resuming sexual relations.
- If you had a tear after your delivery that required sutures (stitches), these will dissolve in approximately 4-6 weeks. For this reason, it is advisable not to have intercourse until the sutures are completely dissolved.
- It is normal to feel uncomfortable at first when you start having sex again after childbirth. Decrease in estrogen levels after delivery, especially if you are nursing, can cause vaginal dryness that can make intercourse uncomfortable. We recommend that you use an over-the-counter water-based lubricant, such as KY Jelly or Astroglide, to minimize discomfort.
- Birth control after delivery depends on your specific circumstance. We will normally discuss birth control with you at your six week postpartum visit.

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When will my period start again?

If you are not breastfeeding your baby, you may start having menstrual periods again in about 3 to 10 weeks. If you are breastfeeding, you may or may not have a period while you are nursing. Generally, it is very unusual to get a period in the first 3-6 months after delivery if you are nursing exclusively, and some women may not get their period at all until after they stop breastfeeding.

When will I return to my normal weight?

During birth, you lose about 12 to 14 pounds. However, this may still leave many pounds to lose (depending on how much weight you gained during pregnancy). Losing this weight takes time. It takes most women approximately 8-12 months to get back to their normal weight. Losing the weight slowly is healthy and natural. The key is to eat healthy and exercise. If you are breastfeeding, you should make sure you are still eating at least 1800 calories a day. Because breastfeeding uses a lot of calories (and is excellent nutrition for the baby), it usually helps women lose their pregnancy weight.

What about breastfeeding?

We highly encourage new moms to breastfeed if desired, due to beneficial effects for both mother and baby. If you do choose to breastfeed, the hospital lactation consultants will be available during your stay at the hospital, as well as by appointment after discharge. If you have any severe pain or redness of your breasts, you may have a breast infection (mastitis) which needs to be treated with antibiotics. Please call the office if you think this is the case. You may still continue to nurse even if you are being treated for an infection.

If you do not breastfeed your baby, you may have some trouble initially with engorgement of your breasts. This may be quite painful. Make sure not to stimulate the breasts (for example, touch or warm showers may stimulate milk production). Wear a tight bra, and occasionally, ice packs to the breasts will help decrease engorgement.

What are the postpartum blues?

Many physical and emotional changes happen when you are pregnant and after you give birth. These changes can leave you feeling sad, anxious, afraid, or confused. These feelings are called the "postpartum blues" and usually start right after the baby is born and go away within 1 to 2 weeks. However, for some women, these feelings do not go away and may get worse. When this happens, it is called postpartum depression. Postpartum depression can start immediately after birth or weeks later. It can be a serious problem and needs treatment (with counseling and/or medication). If you feel depressed, talk to your doctor.

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When should I return for a checkup?

- Most women are discharged from the hospital 1-2 days after a vaginal delivery.
- Call the office if you have any fevers, chills, or unusual abdominal or vaginal pain.
- Call the office to schedule your postpartum visit. This visit usually occurs approximately 6 weeks after your delivery.

How do I take care of my son's circumcision?

- Having your son circumcised is a personal choice. If you decided to have this procedure done, please inform the physician who is discharging you.
- Check for bleeding. A small amount is normal. Call the office if bleeding occurs and you cannot stop it by applying pressure with a clean dressing.
- Remove the dressing in 24 hours. You may have to sponge water onto it to loosen the dressing. You may put Vaseline or A&D ointment on the head of the penis to keep it from sticking to the diaper during the first 2-3 days. On the second day, the penis will develop a cloudy film during the healing process. This is normal. Clean the penis gently with plain warm water. Do not use soap or give a tub bath until healed (usually less than one week).
- Gently retract foreskin from the head of the penis after bathing to loosen skin and to prevent foreskin from sticking to the head of the penis. This will prevent adhesions from forming.

Under what other circumstances should I call the office?

- You have a fever over 100.4 °F
- You have unusual abdominal or genital pain.
- You have increased pain, swelling, redness, or discharge from an episiotomy or tear.
- You are bleeding through more than 1 pad per hour.
- The discharge from your vagina has a foul odor.
- You pass blood clots the size of a plum or larger.
- Your breasts are red or warm with significant pain, or they have an unusual discharge.
- You are unable to empty your bladder, or you feel a burning pain when you urinate.
- Your legs are tender or red.
- You have been feeling depressed or blue for more than 2 to 3 days.

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LABOR INSTRUCTIONS (AFTER 37 WEEKS)

GO TO THE HOSPITAL IF:

- 1) CONTRACTIONS ARE 5 MINUTES APART OR LESS, REGULAR AND CONSISTENT FOR GREATER THAN 1 HOUR.
- 2) SEVERE ABDOMINAL PAIN.
- 3) RUPTURED BAG OF WATERS (EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT SURE – WE NEED TO CHECK THIS OUT).
- 4) HEAVY BLEEDING (MORE THAN A PERIOD).

THE NURSE WILL CALL THE DOCTOR UPON YOUR ARRIVAL

CALL THE OFFICE (THE DOCTOR WILL BE PAGED IF IT IS AFTER OFFICE HOURS) IF:

THE BABY IS NOT MOVING OR HAS DECREASED IT'S MOVEMENT CONSIDERABLY.

REMEMBER, THESE ARE JUST GUIDELINES, INDIVIDUAL SITUATIONS OFTEN REQUIRE SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS – JUST CALL IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.

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