

Care of the Postpartum Mother

***Remember:** Call your Midwife within 24 hours of the birth to let her know how things are going. (We want to hear from you, and we don't want to wake you up by calling.) Call with any concerns or questions as needed. We want to prevent small problems from becoming big problems. The Midwife or Registered Nurse will also make a home visit between 48 and 72 hours to check on you and the baby.

Rest: Take it easy for the first 3 weeks. Don't get out of pajamas. Limit visitors. Caring for yourself and the baby should be your only major responsibility. Your body is healing a large wound inside of the uterus where the placenta was and perhaps also a perineal wound. You will need help for household duties for several weeks. (NO cooking, cleaning, laundry, and caring for your other children. (Though snuggling with them is recommended, no picking up anything or anyone bigger than your baby) Rest when the baby sleeps and limit visitors to close friends or relatives for short visits. Maybe some of them could give you some help around the house. Remember, fatigue decreases your milk supply and your ability to cope with these new added responsibilities. Relax and enjoy your baby.

Cramps: Unfortunately, afterbirth cramps sometimes increase in severity after the first baby. For the pain you may take After Ease, After birth every 15 minutes as needed. They are great right before breastfeeding when the cramping is peaking. Ibuprofen 400-600 mg every 4-6 hours.

Vaginal Bleeding: The uterus should be the size of a grapefruit, and the top of the uterus (fundus) should be on or below the level of your umbilicus (belly button). It will be lower in your pelvis each day and involution can be aided if you massage your uterus a few times each day. For the first 24 hours, bleeding should be no heavier than your heaviest period. Soaking 2 pads and hour x 2 hours is TOO much. Please call your midwife! If you are experiencing ringing in the ears, especially laying down, on going dizziness, fainting please call 911. By day 3, it will have thinned and be lighter in color. By day 7 your bleeding is pink or brown and watery with spotting enough to require a small pad. If after day 7, the bleeding becomes red and heavy, it is often a sign that your "over doing it" and need to slow down. Many women, however, spot sporadically for 4 to 8 weeks postpartum. Call your midwife for excessive bleeding, strong offensive odor, unusual abdominal pain or a fever.

Care of the perineum and/or stitches: Use an ice pack intermittently for the first 24 hours. To make an ice pack put ice in a small baggie and wrap with a wash cloth or paper towel. You can also put crushed ice in a newborn diaper. You can soak some pads in water or herbal bath "tea" and then put them into your freezer. The cold will help to decrease swelling and bruising. After the first 24 hours, the herbal baths and warm packs will probably feel best. Upon discharge, you will be given herbs and instructions on how to "brew" your herbal bath. You may also apply witch hazel or Tucks compresses, particularly to hemorrhoids.

Urination and Bowel Movements: Your first bowel movement will be easier than you anticipate and will not damage stitches if you have any. Drink plenty of fluids, increase your fiber intake (e.g. bran, whole wheat products, raw fruits and vegetables). Drinking one cup of prune juice before bedtime will also help. You can also use and over the counter stool softener call Docusate Sodium (Colace is brand name). Rinse your bottom with warm water with the peri bottle sent home with you after each urination and bowel movement, and then pat dry with toilet paper.

Exercise: Begin gradually and listen to your body.

-Kegal exercises: begin immediately-contract the pelvic floor muscles to increase tone, circulation and speed healing.

-Head lifts/curl ups/and or leg lifts with bent knees and small of back on floor-start the day after birth with five in the morning and five in the evening. Work up to ten in the morning and ten at night. You should limit your stair climbing for about the first week. You are recovering from an event similar to running a marathon and are healing an internal wound site (placental attachment site). Let your bleeding be your guide and remember to get rest.

Intercourse: Usually intercourse is appropriate once your vaginal discharge has stopped and when you both feel ready. If you are breastfeeding it may help you feel more comfortable if you use a lubricant such as Astroglide or KY Liquid. Talk to your midwife if you have any questions or concerns.

Follow up Care Plan: RN/Midwife on day 2-3 at your home; 2-week postpartum visit at the office and 6-week postpartum visit at the office.

Congratulations and Take Care of Yourself!
Holistic Heritage Homebirth