



Discharge Instructions After Vaginal Delivery

1. **Activity:** Keep stairs to a minimum and no heavy lifting. If you have a toddler, encourage him or her to climb up on you lap rather than lift.
2. **After pains:** After delivery, uterus is hard, round, felt at naval, and weighs 2 ½ pounds; 6 weeks later it weighs only 2 ounces. The uterus contracts as it returns to normal size. Contractions are generally mild with first baby and stronger with subsequent babies, and with nursing. They last only a few days. For discomfort, try change of position, lie on abdomen, keep bladder empty, and take Tylenol or Advil.
3. **Bathing:** Tub baths or showers-use plain water-no bubble baths or oils or you may run the risk of infection.
4. **Breasts:** Wear a good supportive bra 24 hours a day for 1-2 weeks if not nursing, and continuously if nursing. If you notice a tender, red, or warm area on one breast, this may be an early sign of infection. Call the office, hot pack the tender area, and continue to breastfeed.
5. **Constipation:** Reduced movement through intestines and relaxed abdominal muscles may contribute to post delivery constipation. Fear of pain from having a bowel movement may contribute. Eat a high fiber diet and drink a lot of fluids. You can use Colace or an over the counter stool softener if needed.
6. **Episiotomy:** Continue tub baths once or twice a day to promote healing and for comfort. It is important to keep the area clean; cleanse with tap water as instructed in the hospital. Occasionally stitches may separate at the skin level. This is not uncommon and will heal by itself. Call the office if you notice any drainage, increased tenderness, or inflammation of the stitches. It takes about 1-3 weeks to heal and may be tender.
7. **Exercise:** Exercise will help restore muscle strength and return your body to its pre-pregnant state. Start when you feel up to it. Start slowly and gradually increase the intensity.
8. **Hemorrhoids:** These are very common after pregnancy and delivery and will gradually decrease in size and may even disappear. For comfort we recommend (1) cold compresses, (2) warm tub baths, (3) over the counter ointment or suppositories such as Preparation H or Anusol HC, (4) Tylenol or Advil.
9. **Vaginal Discharge/Lochia:** For the first few days after delivery the discharge is bright red, perhaps with a few clots. The flow becomes darker and decreases, although the bright red flow may resume on occasion. It will gradually change to a straw-colored discharge. Expect this to last from 4-6 weeks. Activity may affect the amount of flow. If you have a dramatic increase in bleeding, rest more. Call the office if you are saturating more than 1 pad per hour. Do not use tampons.



10. **Lovemaking:** Intercourse may be resumed when lochia stops, or approximately 4 weeks postpartum. You may experience some discomfort at first especially if you have had an episiotomy. For vaginal dryness you can use KY-Jelly or Gyne-Moistrin. This tenderness is temporary and should improve with time.
11. **Nutrition:** Eat the same well balanced diet as instructed during pregnancy. Do not diet without consulting you doctor. Include plenty of fluids to prevent constipation. Continue you prenatal vitamins unless otherwise instructed.
12. **Postpartum Blues:** You may be surprised at how fragile, alone, and overwhelmed you feel. About 70% of women have baby blues after childbirth. Feelings of moodiness, sadness, weepiness, anxiety, and anger usually begin about 3 days after birth. These bewildering and sometimes frightening feelings usually last from a few hours to a week or so and go away without treatment. Call if your feelings are severe, last longer than 2 weeks, or disrupt your ability to function.
13. **Pattern of Menstrual Period:** Your period will return about 4-9 weeks after delivery if you are not breastfeeding. If you are nursing, your periods may not return for several months, or possibly not for 6-12 weeks after weaning. The first few periods may be heavier, but will gradually return to what is normal for you. You may ovulate and could become pregnant before your first period so use reliable contraception if you don't want to become pregnant.
14. **Rest:** You may be surprised at how tired you become after minor activity. Plan to rest when the baby sleeps. Limit visitors the first week or so.
15. **Weight Loss:** You may lose up to 20 pounds within 10 days after delivery. It is best to lose about ½ pound per week, after that be patient. A well-balanced diet coupled with exercise will help you return to you pre-pregnant weight.

Warning Signs

Call immediately if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Fever over 100 degrees
- Nausea and vomiting
- Frequent and painful urination
- Bleeding heavier than 1 pad per hour
- Red, tender, painful area on the breast
- Persistent perineal pain with increasing intensity
- Pain, swelling, and tenderness in leg
- Chest pain and cough