

my body

hospital discharge info

Breast/chest care

Breast/chest fullness and tenderness, also called engorgement, is normal and usually begins approximately 48 hours after birth. The following can help to decrease any discomfort that you may feel:

If you are nursing:

- Feed your baby frequently using both breasts or sides of your chest at each feeding.
- Take a warm shower or apply warm, moist towels to your chest just before feeding.
- Using your hand, gently express some colostrum (this is the thicker, yellow, nutrient-rich substance that comes out immediately after your baby is born) or milk before putting the baby to your chest.
- Be sure the baby takes the whole nipple and areolar areas into their mouth.
- Be sure to break the suction of the baby's mouth on your nipple with your little finger before pulling the baby on to the chest.
- Don't use soap on your nipples.

If you are not nursing:

- Wear a firm, supportive bra 24 hours a day.
- Avoid any unnecessary handling or massaging of the breasts/chest.
- If your chest becomes full and painful, apply ice bags to the area for twenty minute intervals. Crushed or cracked ice in plastic bags works well.
- Medications may be available to help dry up your milk. Talk to your midwife about this.



Nutrition

After giving birth, you have increased nutritional needs, especially if you are breast/chestfeeding. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids and to eat grains, vegetables, fruit, dairy/dairy alternatives, and meats/proteins. Continue to take your personal vitamins and iron tablets as ordered by your midwife or provider.

Vaginal bleeding

Your flow will be heavy for the first two days. It is normal to see several small blood clots. If you have been lying down for several hours, you may experience a gush of blood when you first stand up. This is normal. If, after 3-4 days, your flow becomes bright red again and increases in amount, it usually means that you have been doing too much. This is your body telling you to rest more.

Vaginal healing

Your perineum is the area between your vagina and your anus. You may or may not have stitches here from an episiotomy or vaginal tear.

The following can help:

- Cleanse the perineal area from front to back each time you urinate or have a bowel movement. You may continue to use the spray bottle that you used in the hospital. Apply a clean pad each time you use the bathroom.
- Enjoy a warm sitz bath (sit in warm water) several times a day for comfort and to promote healing.
- If your midwife has prescribed any medications for your vaginal area, use as directed.

Bowel movement

Expect a normal bowel movement by your 3rd or 4th day after delivery. To help your return to a normal pattern of bowel movements:

- Drink prune juice once daily and include foods in your diet that are high in fiber such as fruits and vegetables, bran, and whole grain breads and cereals.
- Take stool softeners as directed by your midwife.
- You can take two tablespoons of Milk of Magnesia if you have no bowel movement by your 3rd or 4th day after delivery.



Urination

You may urinate more than usual on the second and third days after birth. This is normal! It is important to drink a lot of fluids. Six to eight glasses of hydrating fluid (water is the best option), every day is recommended.

Healing your body

You need frequent rest periods and you should try to take naps whenever you can. For the first ten days we recommend that you concentrate on your own physical needs and feeding your baby. Let your family, relatives, and friends worry about housework and meals.

To help your body heal:

- Don't lift anything heavier than your baby for 4 weeks.
- After C-section: Don't lift anything heavier than your baby for six weeks. Don't drive for two weeks.
- You may go back to work in 4-6 weeks after your follow-up appointment with your midwife.
- Don't have sex for 4-6 weeks. Recovery is usually complete when vaginal bleeding stops, meaning the place your placenta was in your uterus has healed.



When to call your midwife

- If you have a temperature equal to or higher than 101° F
- If your vaginal bleeding is heavy and soaks a maxi pad in less than an hour
- If you have worsening pain or redness in one or both sides of your breasts/chest
- If you have trouble emptying your bladder or pain with urination
- If you have any thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- If you have worsening pain, redness, or severe swelling in your calves or thighs, especially if one leg is worse than the other
- If you have blurred vision or start seeing spots
- If you have a bad headache that doesn't improve with sleep and Tylenol®