Home Care Instructions for Mom

After discharge you may discover that you still have questions about body changes, activity, and care during the next few weeks. The following information should be helpful in answering many of your questions.

ACTIVITY

- Resume your daily activities at home gradually.
- Allow time for rest periods during the day, napping while the baby sleeps, if possible.
- Avoid heavy lifting more than 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms) and strenuous work or sports.
- If you had a cesarean birth, you should refrain from vacuuming, stair-climbing, and driving a car for 2 to 3 weeks.

VAGINAL FLOW & RETURN OF MENSES

- Vaginal flow may continue for 4 to 6 weeks after delivery.
- Usually the amount decreases and the color of blood gets lighter.
- Bright red and increased flow may reoccur if you have been too active.
- Lie down, rest, and call your caregiver if you are soaking more than 1 pad an hour or passing large clots.
- Menstrual period will usually return 6 to 8 weeks after delivery.
- If you are breastfeeding, your period will return anywhere from 8 weeks to the time you stop breastfeeding.

PERINEAL CARE

- Use the peri-bottle and change sanitary pads each time you go to the bathroom.
- Use towelettes in place of toilet paper until stitches are healed.
- Warm tub baths (15 to 20 minutes) can be taken as desired.
- Continue to use tucks and/or dermoplast.
- Lidocaine cream for episiotomy pain with your care givers approval.
- Do not use tampons or douches until vaginal bleeding has stopped (about 4 weeks).
- Sexual intercourse should be avoided for at least 3 to 4 weeks after delivery or until the brownish-red vaginal flow is completely gone.
- Use foam and condoms for birth control until you visit your caregiver.
- Pass your urine as soon as you feel you have to urinate to prevent a bladder infection.

INCISION (CUT BY THE SURGEON) CARE

- Following cesarean birth, shower as desired but try to keep your incision dry.
- A small amount of clear or pink drainage is normal.
- The incision site will be tender for several weeks.
- Take prescription or over-the-counter medications for pain with your care givers approval.
- Contact your caregiver if the drainage increases, becomes foul smelling, the incision reddens, or you develop a fever.

BOWELS/HEMORRHOIDS

- Try to avoid constipation by increasing the fluids and fiber in your diet.
- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of non-caffeinated fluids per day.
- Include whole grains, raw fruits and vegetables in your diet.
- If hemorrhoids are a problem, frequent warm tub baths are soothing.
- Avoid straining when trying to pass a stool.
- Over-the-counter medications, stool softeners, can be used. Check with your caregiver.

NUTRITION

- Eat a well-balanced diet that includes the basic food groups.
- Do not try to lose weight quickly by drastically cutting back on calories.

- If you are breastfeeding, drink at least 8 to 10 glasses of (non-caffeinated) fluid per day and increase your intake by 600 calories a day.
- Continue to take your prenatal vitamins at least until the postpartum checkup or until your caregiver tells you to stop.

BREAST CARE

- If you are not nursing, wearing a good tight fitting bra is still important.
- Limiting fluid intake after 1 or 2 days following delivery may be advisable if your breasts are becoming engorged.
- Avoid nipple stimulation and apply cool (not icy-cold) compresses to the breasts for comfort as needed.
- Avoid drinking alcohol and caffeinated drinks.

POSTPARTUM BLUES

Following delivery, your body is going through a drastic change in hormone levels. You may find yourself crying for no apparent reason and unable to cope with all the changes a new baby brings. This is a normal response. Seek support from your partner and/or friends. Give yourself time to adjust. If these feelings persist after several weeks, contact your caregiver or other professionals that can help you.

EXERCISES

Kegel exercises

Start this exercise right after delivery. You can do it while standing, sitting, or lying down. Tighten your stomach muscles and the muscles surrounding your birth canal. Hold for a few seconds and then relax. Do Kegel exercises when you take a sitz bath. Repeat often during the day. Choose special times during the day when you will remember to do this (for example, when using the bathroom, turning the water faucet on, etc.). Repeat 5
times each time. Make Kegel exercises a part of your daily routine to maintain the tone of muscles that support your vagina, bladder, and bowels.

Start the following exercises a few days after you have returned home with the baby. Use them to help tone your muscles. Begin aerobic exercise after your six week check-up. If you are interested in a weight loss plan, talk to your health care provider or a dietician at your six week check-up. Together you can plan a program of regular eating and exercise that will be right for you.

Pelvic Rock

Pelvic rock can be helpful for easing pelvic pain and discomfort. You can do this exercise in any easy position, such as standing, sitting, lying down, or on all fours. Tighten your stomach muscles, pulling in and up, and tighten your buttocks. Rock your pelvis upward, flattening your lower back as you straighten back of the neck (*hollow*). Slowly relax your belly (*abdomen*) and buttocks, allowing the small of your back to relax. Repeat this exercise 5 or 6 times slowly. Repeat before each meal and at bedtime, or more often as desired.

Abdominal Lie

Lie on your abdomen with a pillow below your navel. Use this position during your rest periods and at bedtime for at least ten minutes. Before turning over, stretch from head to toe. Tighten all your back muscles without arching your back. Repeat stretching 4 times.

Arm Raise

Lie on your back with your arms stretched to the sides. Raise your arms straight up and touch your hands; return them to your sides. Begin by repeating 3 times, increasing by 1 each time until you reach a total of 10. Repeat before each meal and at bedtime. This helps tone muscles that will support your back.

Leg Lifting

Lie on your back with your arms at your side. Bend 1 knee, then lift the other leg slowly and keep it straight. Hold it up as high as you can comfortably and let it down slowly. Repeat with other leg. Begin by doing this three times. Increase by 1 each time until you reach a total of ten. Repeat before each meal and at bedtime.

Head and Shoulder Lifting

Lie on your back with your arms at your sides. Tighten your stomach muscles, raise your head and shoulders,

and hold for a count of 6. Do not hold your breath. Lie back and relax. Begin by doing this 3 times. Increase by 1 each time until you reach a total of 10. Repeat before each meal and at bedtime.

Hand to Opposite Knee

Lie on your back with your knees bent. Later you can leave your legs straight. Tighten your stomach muscles. Raise your head and shoulders, and run 1 hand down the opposite thigh reaching for your knee. Repeat on the opposite side. Begin by doing this 3 times. Increase by 1 each time until you reach a total of 10. Repeat before each meal and at bedtime.

SELF BREAST EXAMINATION

- A self breast exam needs to be an important part of every woman's self-care.
- Do your self breast exam once a month, 5 to 7 days after your period begins, unless you are breastfeeding.
- Do self breast exams at the same time of the month each month, on a day of your choice.
- Any lump, bump or discharge should be reported to your caregiver.
- The best time to check your breasts, if you are breastfeeding, is just after a good feeding when your breasts are less full. If your period has started and you are breastfeeding, check them on the 5th to 7th day.
- Remember, breasts are normally "lumpy" if you are breastfeeding, due to the fullness of the milk cells. This is temporary and not a health risk.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IMMEDIATELY IF YOU NOTICE:

- Sanitary pad soaked with blood in 1 hour or less.
- Severe lower abdominal pain or cramping.
- Foul-smelling discharge from vagina.
- Increased rather than decreased pain around stitches and/or swelling, redness or hardness in area.
- An oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C) develops or as your caregiver suggests.
- Pain and/or redness in calf of the leg.
- Nausea with vomiting for 12 hours.
- Sudden, severe chest pain.
- Shortness of breath. Painful urination.
- Severe headache.
- Area of the breast is red and sore and you have a fever. (You may feel like you have flu symptoms.)

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