Cesarean Section (Postpartum Care)

These discharge instructions provide you with general information on cesarean section (caesarean, cesarian, caesarian) and caring for yourself after you leave the hospital. Your caregiver may give you ***specific*** instructions.

Please read these instructions and refer to them in the next few weeks. If you have any questions regarding these instructions, you may call the nursing unit. If you have any problems after discharge, please call your doctor. If you are unable to reach your doctor, you should get help at the nearest emergency department.

ACTIVITY

- Rest as much as possible the first two weeks at home.
- When possible, have someone help you with your household activities and the new baby for 2 to 3 weeks.
- Limit your housework and social activity. Increase your activity gradually as your strength returns.
- **Do not** climb stairs more than two or three times a day.
- Do not lift anything heavier than your baby.
- Follow your doctor's instructions about driving a car.
- Limit wearing support panties or control-top hose, since relying on your own muscles helps strengthen them.
- Ask your doctor about exercises.

NUTRITION

- You may return to your usual diet.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluid a day.
- Eat a well-balanced diet. Include portions of food from the meat/protein, milk, fruit, vegetable and bread groups.
- Keep taking your prenatal or multivitamins.

ELIMINATION

You should return to your usual bowel function. If constipation is a problem, you may take a mild laxative such as Milk of Magnesia™ with your caregiver's permission. Gradually add fruit, vegetables and bran to your diet. Make sure to increase your fluids.

HYGIENE

You may shower, wash your hair and take tub baths unless your doctor tells you otherwise. Continue peri-care until your vaginal bleeding and discharge stops. **Do not** douche or use tampons until your caregiver says it is OK.

FEVER

If you feel feverish or have shaking chills, take your temperature. If your temperature is 101° F (38.3° C), or is 100.4° F (38° C) two times in a four hour period, call your doctor. The fever may indicate infection. If you call early, infection can be treated with medicines that kill germs (*antibiotics*). Hospitalization may be avoided.

PAIN CONTROL

You may still have mild discomfort. Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicine as directed by your caregiver. **Do not take aspirin; it can cause bleeding.** If the pain is not relieved by your medicine or becomes worse, call your caregiver.

INCISION CARE

Clean your cut (*incision*) gently with soap and water. If your caregiver says it is okay, leave the incision without a dressing unless it is draining or irritated. If you have small adhesive strips across the incision and they do not fall off within 7 days, carefully peel them off. Check the incision daily for increased redness, drainage, swelling or separation of skin. Call your caregiver if any of these happen.

VAGINAL CARE

You may have a vaginal discharge or bleeding for up to 6 weeks. If the vaginal discharge becomes bright red, bad smelling, heavy in amount, has blood clots or if you have burning or frequency when urinating, call your caregiver.

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

It is best to follow your caregiver's advice about when you may safely start sexual intercourse again. Most women can begin to have intercourse two to three weeks after their baby's birth.

You can become pregnant before you have a period. If you decide to have sexual intercourse, you should use birth control if you do not want to become pregnant right away.

HEALTH PRACTICES

It is still important to have a yearly pelvic exam. Continue monthly self-breast exams and yearly physical exams with a Pap test.

BREAST CARE

If you are not breastfeeding and your breasts become tender, hard or leak milk, you may wear a firm fitting bra and apply ice to the breasts. If you are breastfeeding, wear a good support bra. Call your caregiver if you have breast pain, flu-like symptoms, fever or hardness and reddening of your breasts.

POSTPARTUM BLUES

After the excitement of having the baby goes away, you may commonly have a period of low spirits or “blues." Discuss your feelings with your partner, family and friends. This may be caused by the changing hormone levels in your body. You may want to contact your caregiver if this is worrisome.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is swelling, redness or increasing pain in the wound area.
- Pus is coming from the wound.
- You notice a bad smell from the wound or surgical dressing.
- You have pain, redness and swelling from the intravenous site.
- The wound is breaking open (the edges are not staying together).
- You feel dizzy or feel like fainting.
- You develop pain or bleeding when you urinate.
- You develop diarrhea.
- You develop nausea and vomiting.
- You develop abnormal vaginal discharge.
- You develop a rash.
- You have any type of abnormal reaction or develop an allergy to your medication.
- You need stronger pain medication for your pain.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE:

- You develop a temperature of 100º F (37.8º C) or higher.
- You develop abdominal pain.
- You develop chest pain.
- You develop shortness of breath.
- You pass out.

- You develop pain, swelling or redness of your leg.
- You develop heavy vaginal bleeding with or without blood clots.

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