



**MERITAS
HEALTH**

Pavilion for Women

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Patient Instructions - Vaginal Delivery Congratulations and Best Wishes!

GENERAL ACTIVITY

The process of getting you and your baby settled at home can be very tiring. Rest at home the remainder of the day. It is important that you arrange your life to be able to rest a good portion of each day. The speed of recovery is quite variable, but most women will benefit from at least a week or two during which time their only responsibility is to themselves and to the baby.

For the first week after you go home, it is important to rest as your body heals. Do not spend prolonged periods of time lying flat or sitting, and try not to cross your legs at the knees. Walking is important to your recovery. It is normal to feel tired after minimal activity. Listen to your body and increase your activities gradually as tolerated. It is generally safe to climb stairs, lift up to 20 pounds and perform other routine activities if they can be done without pain. The key to a successful recovery is not to push yourself past discomfort or tiredness, but you may find that you need to limit how often you do something, if you are feeling weak or uncomfortable.

Driving: Driving should not be done for the first week or if you are still in pain or needing pain medications.

Travel: Travel should be avoided for at least two weeks and after two weeks you must get out of the car frequently and walk to maintain good circulation.

Exercise: No strenuous exercise should be done for the first 2 weeks. Walking, daily activity and “pulling in” of the abdomen will promote muscle tone and may be done safely during the first couple of weeks.

Employment: Plan to return to work 4 – 6 weeks after delivery.

PERINEAL CARE

Especially if you have had an episiotomy or a tear, a sitz bath or applying a warm washcloth a few times a day will provide soothing comfort and will accelerate healing. The use of a peri-bottle or a “squirt” bottle with warm water directed to your perineum as you urinate will dilute the urine and lessen the sting. A topical foam such as Epifoam can be applied to a Tucks pad and then applied to the perineum to provide comfort.

BREAST CARE

Breast Feeding: Keep the nipples clean, dry and protected from chafing. Keep the breasts well supported with a good nursing bra. If you notice redness, pain, fever, or swollen glands under the arms, call the office.

Bottle Feeding: Avoid all breast stimulation! Keep the breasts well supported with a snug bra or breast wrap for a week or more. Wearing one or two sports bras will serve to keep the breasts compressed to the chest wall. Nursing pads or a sanitary pad in each cup can further compress the breasts. If they still enlarge and feel uncomfortable, apply an ice pack 3 – 4 times a day on the sides of the breasts and under the armpit. Try 2 – 3 Ibuprofen (400 – 600mg) every 4 – 6 hours, for relief of pain.

CRAMPS

In addition to incisional discomfort, you may have “after birth” pains. They are usually gone within 2 weeks of leaving the hospital if you are not breast feeding. If you are breast feeding then you may have cramping for a longer period of time. You were most likely given a prescription for Ibuprofen (Motrin) before leaving the hospital. This will help reduce the cramping as well as reducing the inflammation from delivery itself. If you did not receive a prescription, try 2 – 3 Ibuprofen (each pill should be 200mg) every six hours or 1 – 2 Tylenol (325mg pills) every 4 hours.

INTERCOURSE

It is best to wait until after you are free of pain. It takes varying lengths of time for you to be comfortable. Generally we recommend that you wait at least 4 weeks and possibly up to 6 weeks depending on your comfort level.

CONTRACEPTION

Contraception may be started as early as 2 weeks postpartum or after your six week exam. Think about and discuss your contraceptive needs before your first postpartum visit.

Remember, the possibility of becoming pregnant **exists** even if you have not had a period. Breast feeding is **NOT** a method of birth control.

HEMORRHOIDS

Use sitz baths and apply Nupercainal, Americaine, Preparation H or Anusol ointments as necessary. Tucks pads or Witch Hazel applied with a cotton ball are very soothing.

VITAMINS & IRON

After you have regained normal bowel function, resume vitamin and iron use until your six week check up. If you are nursing, continue your prenatal vitamins until you wean the baby. Many people choose to change to an OTC (over the counter) prenatal vitamin at this time due to the cost. This is perfectly acceptable.

BATHING

Heat may make you dizzy at first, so keep the water a little cooler. We recommend that you do **NOT** shower if you are home alone initially. Showers are preferred over tub baths for the first 2 weeks at home. You may wash your hair any time. Do not douche.

BLEEDING

Some bloody discharge is present for up to 6 weeks. At first the bleeding will be red, with small clots, gradually becoming pink, then yellow-gray. You may pass occasional blood clots. These are very typical after you have been lying down or sitting for a long period of time and then get up to go to the restroom. Heavier bleeding is often seen after a person has been more active. This should be your signal to slow down and rest. We need to be notified only if you are bleeding more than 1 pad, fully saturated, per hour. Return of the menstrual cycle varies, usually 6 – 10 weeks if NOT nursing, and generally after 3 months or more, and sometimes not at all, if you are nursing.

EMOTIONS

After delivery you may have emotional ups and downs. Many women find themselves crying for no apparent reason, or feel sad, anxious, afraid, or angry. Usually, these are symptoms of postpartum “blues” and should go away within a few weeks. About 10% of mothers experience a more severe change called postpartum depression, which lasts longer and is more intense. This may require counseling or medical treatment. If you are not feeling better after the first few weeks or are worried that you are experiencing postpartum depression, please call the office immediately.

FOLLOW-UP VISIT

Call the office within the week that you get home in order to schedule a 6 week follow-up appointment (unless you have been instructed to be seen in the office early) for a full examination and discussion of contraceptive needs. A picture of your baby to hang on our office wall is always appreciated! Our office number is 816-452-3300. One of us is always available if problems occur, and will see you if necessary, before your routine postpartum exam.

NOTIFY US IF:

- ❖ Temperature more than 100.5 degrees, or shakes or chills.
- ❖ Abdominal pain that is not relieved by rest and medication, or if the pain increase with time.
- ❖ Bleeding excessively (soaking a pad every 1 hour).
- ❖ Foul smelling vaginal discharge.
- ❖ Burning or pain with urination or low back pain.
- ❖ Leg pain, swelling or redness.
- ❖ Swollen tender area of the episiotomy or a draining area.
- ❖ Worsening depression or anxiety.

****Before calling the office with a problem, have a pencil and paper ready to jot down our instructions and have your pharmacy number available.**

*****If you think you have a "fever" check with a thermometer before calling the office.**

**Please do not hesitate to call during regular business hours if you have any general questions.
General, non-emergent questions are not handled after hours.**

Once again, congratulations on the birth of your new baby!

