



# WHAT TO EXPECT POSTPARTUM

## WHAT CAN I EXPECT THE FIRST FEW MONTHS AFTER MY BABY IS BORN?

- **Abdomen:** After birth you may still look pregnant. Your belly will decrease in size within a few weeks. You may experience cramps as your uterus goes back to normal size.
- **Vagina:** You will have vaginal bleeding like a period for about a week after you deliver. You may pass clots during this time. The bleeding usually tapers over the following 2-3 weeks and will eventually stop. Spotting can continue for up to 2 months after delivery. You may notice vaginal dryness for several months, especially if you are breastfeeding your baby.
- **Perineum:** You may have soreness in the area between your vagina and anus for 1-2 weeks after delivery, especially if you have a tear or stitches. You can continue to use the ice packs, numbing spray, and Tuck's pads that you received in the hospital. You can also use warm water rinses or shallow warm tub baths to relieve discomfort. Take over-the-counter pain relievers as needed.
- **Breasts:** Your milk will come in about 2-5 days after delivery. Once that happens, your breasts may become engorged (feel full and tender). Wear a supportive bra to help with this discomfort. You may also noticed a low-grade fever (less than 100.4) associated with your milk coming in. Your temperature will return to normal once the engorgement improves. Your nipples may become tender and sore if you are nursing or pumping. If they become very red, cracked or begin to bleed, please call the office and a provider can prescribe an ointment to help heal nipple trauma.
  - Please contact UPMC Lactation Consultants with any questions regarding breastfeeding your baby or with any concerns at 717-782-5372.
- **Bowels and Bladder:** You may experience extra gas or gas pains during the first few weeks after delivery. You may be constipated, especially if you are breastfeeding. Try increasing your intake of fiber (fruits and vegetables) and drink lots of fluids. Pain with bowel movements along with swelling of your anus (hemorrhoids) can occur after delivery. Use over-the-counter hemorrhoid creams or Tucks pads for this discomfort. Taking an over the counter stool softener can make bowel movements more comfortable. You can start strengthening your pelvic floor muscles by doing Kegel exercises soon after delivery. This can help with any leaking of urine you may be experiencing. Generally, if you are experiencing urine leaking, it will resolve on its own overtime, but a referral to Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy can be made if needed.
  - [How-to guide to Kegel exercises](#)
- **Cesarean Incision:** If you had a cesarean birth, you can expect a longer recovery period. It will take about 6 weeks to completely heal from your surgery. Externally, your incision should look healed in 2-3 weeks. You may have soreness or numbness at or near the incision for several months.
- **Weight:** It can take up to 6 months to lose the weight you gained during pregnancy. Eating a healthy diet and doing light exercise like walking can help you lose the pregnancy weight.

- **Hair and Skin:** Hair loss is common after delivery and can continue for several months. Any skin pigmentation changes that occurred during pregnancy will slowly fade. Stretch marks will fade, but will not disappear.
- **Mood Changes:** You may have a wide range of emotions after delivery. Your mood can change quickly and without warning. This is very normal. Within 2-3 weeks, your emotions will become more stable and predictable. Take time to care for yourself. Ask family members and friends to support you.
- **Sex:** Your body needs time to heal after giving birth. Soreness of your bottom, hormone changes, and the demands of caring for a newborn may contribute to a decreased desire for sex. It is important to wait until you are seen for your postpartum appointment before you begin having sex. Your provider will make sure you are healed and ready for intercourse. They can provide you with strategies to help with any discomfort that you might experience with sex.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP RECOVER AND ADJUST TO BEING A NEW MOM?

- Ask for help. Let other people cook and clean while you focus on you and the baby.
- Sleep when the baby sleeps. You need rest to heal.
- Go outside for fresh air and some exercise. Walk with the baby or have your family/partner watch the baby and take time to care for yourself.
- Take a few minutes every day just for you. Take a shower, do some activities that you enjoy.
- Talk to other moms. Join a support group like UPMC's HOPE group to connect with other moms.
- Take time each day to enjoy your baby and encourage your partner to do this too!

## WHAT ARE SOME REASONS TO CALL THE OFFICE?

- You have a fever of 100.4 or above.
- Your bleeding is heavy enough to soak a maxi pad an hour for more than 2 hours or you pass golf ball or larger sized clots.
- Your cesarean incision is more tender, red, or draining.
- Your bottom becomes more tender, red, or swollen.
- You have foul-smelling vaginal discharge.
- You develop a severe headache, vision changes, or upper abdominal pain.
- You develop pain, redness, or swelling in one of your legs.
- You are feeling very depressed or anxious, experiencing severe mood swings, loss of appetite, lack of joy, overwhelming fatigue, lack of interest in caring for yourself or your newborn, or have thoughts of hurting yourself, the baby, or others.

PIWH providers are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you have concerns that worry you, please contact the office any time at 717-737-4511. During office hours, choose option 4 to reach a triage nurse