

Postpartum Discharge Teaching



The Birthing Center
(802) 888-8304

The Women's Center
(802) 888-8100

Bleeding

- Postpartum bleeding (lochia) will start out bright red and may be heavy for the first few days, eventually transitioning to a lighter, more period-like flow. This may last up to 2 more weeks before turning to a light beige discharge, which may last a further 2 or 3 weeks.
- Use only pads (no tampons) for the bleeding. Anything in the vagina increases the risk for infection while your uterus is healing.
- You should notice your bleeding becoming lighter over the next few weeks. You may see an increase in bleeding with increased activity; this is your body's way of telling you to take it easy. This time is for resting and allowing your body to heal. Listen to your body!
- You may notice a small gush or pass some small clots after you have been sitting or lying down for an extended period of time. This is normal, as long as it doesn't continue once you have been upright for a while.
- If you notice a large gush or a constant trickle, are saturating a pad an hour for multiple hours in a row, or pass a clot larger than a baseball, call your provider right away. Postpartum hemorrhage can occur up to 12 weeks postpartum, and while it is not common, it is a medical emergency.
- If you notice a foul smell to your discharge, are experiencing increasing pain, or have a fever of 100.4° F or above, call your provider.

Perineal Care

- Whether or not you had stitches, your perineum has some healing to do. If you did have stitches, they will start to dissolve around 2 weeks postpartum. They can sometimes cause minor itching as they dissolve.
- Use a peri bottle as needed when you pee and pat gently with toilet paper; wiping may be painful and irritating.
- Whether you had a vaginal delivery or a c-section, you may have swelling. Sitting in a bath, using a sitz bath and using witch hazel pads may all help to decrease swelling and discomfort. Likewise, you can put witch hazel and liquid aloe on regular pads and put them in the freezer before use.
- You may have developed hemorrhoids, either during pregnancy or during labor. These varicose veins in your rectum can be painful and itchy. Witch hazel pads reduce swelling and are soothing; you may even put them in the freezer and place them right onto the affected area.
- Drinking lots of water (at least 8-12 cups a day) and eating plenty of fiber will help make bowel movements easier. Eating a few prunes a day or drinking prune juice can also help. Using the peri bottle after bowel movements will help to keep the area around your vagina clean until it is healed.

Sex

- While your uterus is healing, putting anything in the vagina increases the risk for infection. We recommend waiting to resume intercourse until after your 6 week visit, at which point your provider will check you over and answer any questions you may have. Once you are healed, you can think about resuming intercourse *if you want to!* It may be the last thing on your mind right now, and that's ok.
- When you do decide to have sex again it is important to use contraception. Breastfeeding/chestfeeding is not a reliable form of birth control, especially if you aren't nursing your baby every 2-3 hours around the clock. Condoms are a great choice right now if you are not already using another method, but be sure to speak with your provider if you are interested in other forms of contraception.
- Vaginal dryness occurs postpartum after your bleeding has stopped. Using a vaginal lubricant can help increase comfort and pleasure when you are resuming sexual activity. If you are using condoms for contraception be sure to use a water-based lubricant.
- Take it slowly, and give your partner guidance about what feels good and what does not. This will make things more comfortable and more enjoyable. Let your provider know if sex is very painful.

Activity/Exercise

- It is really important that you spend the next two weeks resting and healing. Try to limit visitors, and when they do come, let them help you! They want to help. It might be useful to keep a list on your wall of chores that need to be done, and you can give your guests the option of picking one to cross off the list!
- Short walks are a great way to ease back into exercise. This low impact activity, together with fresh air, is good for your body and your psyche. You can work up to this. For the first few days, walk around your bed; after the first week, walk around your house; by the second week, if you feel up to it, try walking around your block (or the dirt road equivalent).
- Kegels are an important exercise for strengthening your pelvic floor and abdominal wall muscles. This will help with control of urine and bowel movements. Practice kegels any time you think about it!
- Remember that your body should let you know if you are overdoing it. If you notice an increase in bleeding, take some time to rest and try to go more slowly next time.

Breast/Chest Care

- If you are breastfeeding/chestfeeding your baby, especially if it is your first time, you may feel anxious and, at times, defeated. This is normal. Remember that babies are programmed to breastfeed/chestfeed, and you are programmed to produce milk. If that wasn't the case, humans would not be here right now! But there is a learning curve. We are meant to be surrounded by knowledgeable, helpful hands, so don't hesitate to reach out for help! We have a lactation consultant available in the office (802-888-8100) and she is happy to support you and answer your questions. Try to be patient with yourself and your baby. You are both doing your best!
- If you are bottle-feeding your baby, expect your body to take a little bit of time to work it out. Try not to stimulate your nipples or chest at all (do not pump; this will only prolong the discomfort), and wear a snug bra around the clock. Although not everyone experiences engorgement, it can be painful. You can put cold compresses on your chest and take Tylenol or ibuprofen; it should resolve in 48-72 hours.
- Check out the blue *Breastfeeding* book included in your folder for lots of great info.

Hormones

- As your body withdraws from pregnancy hormones, it's not uncommon to experience hot flashes and to wake up damp or even soaked with sweat in the middle of the night. This may last several weeks. If you think you may have a fever, take your temperature. Call your provider if your temperature is 100.4°F or above.

Baby Blues

- It is common to feel a huge range of emotions in the weeks following your baby's birth. Exhaustion, an unpredictable schedule, a baby who needs you 24 hours a day, and lack of regular meals all add up to the baby blues. Try to sleep whenever you can, eat regular meals, and drink at least 8-12 cups of water a day. These things will help keep you healthy and feeling better. Remember that it's normal to feel emotional for a couple weeks after delivery, and it should pass.
- If a couple weeks go by and you are still feeling overwhelmed, or if you feel like you can't handle your baby or aren't feeling love for your baby, if your anxiety is increasing or you can't sleep, then you might be experiencing a kind of postpartum mood disorder. This is not uncommon, and there is support for you. Call our office at 888-8100 so we can help support you and your baby.