

Birth, Babies and Beyond Postpartum Instructions for Baby

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Congratulations! Welcome to your beautiful, amazing newborn!

You have given birth, nursed your baby, gotten cleaned up, and eaten some well deserved food. Tucked into bed with your little one, you should both get some sleep, you've had quite a day. This period is often a newborn's deepest and longest sleep for a while...so take advantage of it.

Always call immediately if your newborn:

- has a temperature below 97.0 or above 99.0 no matter what you do
- will not wake up to nurse after 6 hours
- has jaundice before the second, or after the tenth day
- is listless, limp, or bluish in color
- has serious difficulty breathing
- has convulsions or jittery movements of the arms or legs
- cries persistently without relief

Feeding your Newborn

After the birth and initial long nursing, your baby may sleep 4-6 hours before waking up. Try to feed her after 4 hours, but if she is fast asleep, you may wait another hour or two. If you are unable to get her to eat after 6 hours, call me.

In general, your baby will want to nurse every 1 to 3 hours for 10-30 minutes on each breast. Nursing on demand allows the baby to finely tune your milk supply to his needs. Make sure that he is nursing at least every four hours, however, with an average of 8 feedings per 24 hours. If he is sleeping soundly after 4 hours, you may let him go 6 hours between feedings. Don't do this more than once per day.

The first milk is called colostrum. It is golden colored, and incredibly nutritive. It is specially designed for your very own newborn, and she will love it. Colostrum provides your baby with just the right combination of calories and fats, as well as a vast supply of immunoglobulins to protect her from infections. Colostrum is so concentrated that it comes in small volumes. Don't worry- your baby is getting all that she needs, and does not need to be supplemented with any extra fluids. The regular milk will come in 2-3 days after birth, and there will be plenty of it.

The vast majority of women do not need to worry about adequate milk supply. It's a very accurate system of supply and demand. The way that you know that you baby is indeed getting plenty of milk, is by monitoring his "elimination". If he is peeing and pooping enough, you know all is well.

Baby's Elimination

Your baby's first bowel movements are called meconium. This is very dark, tarry, and sticky stuff. Its elimination is promoted by the colostrum your baby is lucky enough to be getting. Be sure to coat your baby's bottom with oil after diaper changes, so that the sticky meconium won't get stuck to her bottom. As the milk starts to come in, you will notice the meconium being replaced with normal breastmilk poop. This is very soft and yellow, and may have a variety of

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textures...Most babies will have a bowel movement 2 to 8 times a day. Since colostrum comes in small volumes, you may not notice many wet diapers the first two days. Make sure to note that he does pee at least once in the first 24 hours. After your milk comes in, he should have at least 8 to 10 wet diapers a day.

Baby's Temperature

Your baby will not be able regulate her temperature very well during the first several weeks of her life. She can become too cold or too hot fairly easily. For this reason, you should check your baby's temperature 2 to 3 times per day for the first two weeks. Use a thermometer under her arm, directly against her skin. Her temperature should be between 97.0 and 99.0 degrees. If your baby is too hot, remove a layer of clothing. If your baby is too cold, you may put more clothes on, or use either a hot water bottle, or your own body to warm her up. Recheck your baby's temperature after a half hour, it should be in range. You will soon figure out how much clothing your baby needs to stay at a normal temperature.

Umbilical Cord Care

Your baby's umbilical cord does not need much special care. The cord clamp will be removed at the 24 hour post partum visit. The cord itself will dry up and fall off within 5 to 7 days. The main thing that you need to do is to keep it dry. Make sure to roll back the top of his diapers, and change them frequently so that the cord does not get wet. You should also avoid giving him a full bath until the cord has fallen off. Sponge baths are fine until then. Your baby's cord should not have a strong or unpleasant odor. Although it may be moist, there should not be any noticeable bleeding or discharge.

Baby's Skin

Many newborns may have mild rashes, especially on their faces. One form will look like small white spots, while another common rash can look like small insect bites. These usually resolve on their own within the first six weeks. Avoid using any strong soaps or lotions on your baby's skin or clothing. When bathing your baby, only use very mild and dilute soap, no more than once a week.

Many babies develop a yellow hue to their skin on the third day after birth. This is called physiological jaundice and is perfectly normal. This mild jaundice should clear up after the seventh to tenth day. If you notice this yellow hue starting on the first day, or after the tenth day, call me.

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Postpartum Instructions for Mom

Call Immediately if you:

- soak through 2 pads within a half hour
- your temperature rises above 100.4 F
- pass a clot larger than the size of a lemon
- feel like you are starting to get an infection. Body aches, cold and clammy, etc.

Rest, Rest, Rest

The more that you rest in the first few days and week, the better you will feel for weeks to come. The first 3 days you should stay mostly in bed. You can go sit on the couch, but no housework, no walking, no cooking, no chasing other kids around. Get up to use the bathroom or take a shower or bath. After the first few days, make sure you are still resting in mornings and afternoons. Take naps with your baby when you can.

When friends and family come to visit, they should help with some light housework and keep their visits short. Ask someone to take older siblings out, or walk your dog. Prepared meals are always a great help as well, and keep you out of the kitchen longer.

Food

Eat simple foods for the first day. Include natural high fiber foods like bran, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables to prevent constipation. Avoid foods that are difficult to digest, highly spiced or tend to cause you gas- these may irritate your baby's belly. Some newborns are also quite sensitive to caffeine or chocolate. Remember, it takes more calories to breastfeed a baby, than it does to grow one in your belly. Continue eating the same healthy diet you had during your pregnancy. This is not a time to diet or try to lose weight. Eat well, keep nursing your baby. Be sure to drink lots of water during this period. The first few days, you should be drinking the equivalent of a cup every hour, to replenish your blood supply, and to work on making milk. While nursing, you should drink no less than 10 cups per day. It's a good idea to always have some water with you when you're nursing.

Continue to take your prenatal vitamins the entire time that you are nursing. If you were taking iron previous to the birth, continue to do so for the first six weeks. Its also a good idea to continue taking high quality fish oil or B-vitamins.

Afterpains

After your placenta has been delivered, your uterus will continue to periodically contract. These normal contractions are you body's way to stop your bleeding, and begin to shrink your uterus back to pre-pregnant size. These contractions can be quite strong, especially if you have already had one or more children. Aftepains tend to come when you are nursing your newborn, as the suckling promotes the releases of oxytocin, which tells your uterus to contract. These contractions will become less frequent and less intense by your second day postpartum, and typically end by day 3 or 4. Taking 1200 mg of Calcium with 600mg of Magnesium can ease the intensity of these contractions. You can also take Ibuprofen to manage the pain, this will be safe for your baby. You may take up to 800 mg a day as needed.

Afterpains come and go, and decrease in intensity the first few days. This is in contrast to the pain that you would feel from a possible infection. If you experience pelvic pain that is continuous, or increases over the first few days, call me. You can monitor yourself for infection,

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by taking your temperature during the first few days. You may get a slight fever when your milk comes in, but if your temperature rises above 100.4 degrees, call me.

Vaginal Bleeding and Discharge(lochia)

For the first few days after birth, you will have heavy vaginal bleeding which will be like a heavy menstrual period. Initially, you may be changing pads every 1 to 3 hours. If you soak 2 large pads within half an hour, your are bleeding too much, and need to call me. You may pass some clots, which may range from ½ to 3 inches in diameter. This is fine, as long as your bleeding does not become excessive.

Your main way to prevent and control excess bleeding is through uterine massage. When the uterus is firmly massaged, its muscles clamp down around the blood vessels, and stops bleeding. When you press down into your abdomen, it should feel hard and firm, about the size of a grapefruit. The top of your uterus should be below the level of your belly button. Always feel for your uterus, and make sure that it is firm before standing up. If it is not, massage deeply from your belly button, straight back to your spine and down, until you feel your uterus 'ball up'. This technique should also be used any time your bleeding is excessive.

Vaginal bleeding after childbirth is referred to as Lochia. It lasts between 4 to 6 weeks for most women, and proceeds through several stages. The first few days to week, lochia tends to be moderate to heavy, with bright red blood and occasional clots. The following couple of weeks, your lochia should start decreasing, and being a darker red. The last few weeks are typically increasingly light, to spotting. Throughout the postpartum period, you'll find that your bleeding will be a good gauge of the appropriate activity level. You'll find that if you overdo it, your flow will increase, or become bright red again. This is an indication that you need to stop and rest for a day or two. The more you listen and rest as needed, the sooner your bleeding will stop altogether.

You should not have sex until your bleeding has stopped completely, usually between 4-6 weeks.

Dizziness

Many women may feel dizzy the first day or two after birth. This is especially common who lose more blood, or who are anemic. Always take your time becoming vertical. First sit up and make sure that you are not dizzy, before standing up. The first day, it's a good idea to have someone walk with you, or accompany you to the bathroom or shower. If you do feel dizzy, you should just sit right down, and put your head low. You should not be carrying your baby around the first day. Remember not to stand suddenly, and to massage your uterus before rising. Eating lots of good nutritious food, and drinking a whole lot of fluids can both help quite a bit.

Breast Care and Breastfeeding

You will be spending a lot of time feeding your baby for the months to come. Breastfeeding is a great thing, but can sometimes take a little adjusting to. Your baby will start to nurse soon after birth. After this initial feeding, your baby may have a long period of sleep. Afterwards, you can expect to be nursing every 1 to 3 hours for 10-30 minutes on each breast. Allow your baby to nurse on demand, this will ensure a good milk supply. For the first few days, you will produce only colostrum, but your milk should come in between day 2 and 3. Many women experience engorgement when their milk first comes in. Your breasts may feel hard, lumpy and painful as they fill with milk. The best way to minimize the discomfort is to breastfeed frequently during the days that your milk comes in. If you do experience pain or discomfort with your milk, you can use warm, moist compresses over your breasts, or stand under a hot shower for relief. Be sure to keep

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breastfeeding your baby, as this is the one thing that will bring down the engorgement. If this breast pain persists or worsens, if you notice a red and hot spot on your breast, experience achiness or chills, or have a fever over 100.4 degrees, call me.

Many women experience sore nipples during the first few weeks. The best way to prevent worsening pain or cracked nipples, is to pay careful attention to your baby's latch. While nursing, your baby should have your entire nipple in her mouth. If she is only suckling on the tip, take her off, and reposition her. Make sure that your baby is not sucking in her bottom lip while nursing. If you notice your baby pulling your nipple in and out while nursing, pull him closer in against your chest. We will pay close attention to baby's latch and breastfeeding patterns during our postpartum visits.

Perineal Care

It is not unusual to feel sore and bruised for a while, whether you needed stitches or not. Clean ice packs will help the pain and swelling during the first day or two. While you are resting in bed during the first week, remember to keep your legs and knees together as much as possible. This will allow any torn tissue to heal, and decreased pressure on any stitches you may have. To decrease any discomfort while peeing, spray off with your peri-bottle while you pee. It can also help to lean forward, so that the urine goes directly into the toilet, and does not come in contact with any tears or stitches. Comfrey gel is a great way to speed up healing. After using the toilet, pat dry and smear a wad of comfrey gel along your yoni.

Wait 2 days after birth to take a bath, although you may take a shower or sitz bath as desired. After that time, it is important to keep the genital area as clean as possible. You may want to spray off with your peri-bottle after peeing or having a bowel movement. Do not put anything into your vagina (not tampons...no sex...) until your lochia has completely resolved, usually 4 to 6 weeks after birth. If you notice any smelly vaginal discharge, or experience any increasing pain, call me.

Exercising

You should resume doing your kegels after the first day. The more often you do these, the sooner you will regain normal muscle tone in your vagina. These muscles are very important in maintaining pelvic integrity and preventing incontinence later in life. Do these as often as you can remember- many women try to do some whenever they are nursing. You should continue these at least for at least 9 months after birth.

You can begin going on gentle walks after the first week postpartum. Gradually increase, until you are up to a good aerobic walk by 1 month postpartum. At this point, you can start re-introducing other forms of exercise. Remember to start slowly and take it easy. If you find that your lochia returns or increases after exercising, you overdid it.

Please don't hesitate to call if you have any questions or concerns!

-The BBB Midwives