

Health Information for Birth Mother

Giving birth is a demanding activity that weakens your body so you will need time and rest to be yourself again. The information below explains physical and emotional changes that may happen to you after you give birth. There is also a list of warning signs that could indicate you might have serious health issues that will need to be followed by a doctor.

Physical and emotional changes you may experience after the birth of your child:

- Your vaginal flow will be bright red following the birth of your baby. Slowly it will fade from brown to pink, finally becoming clear about four to six weeks after delivery.
- Don't be surprised if going to the bathroom for the first couple of days after delivery is uncomfortable. The flow may sting and the urine may come out in small trickles until you regain full bladder control. It is important to urinate at least every six hours. When your bladder is empty, your uterus can return to its normal position in your body. It is also necessary to urinate often to prevent urinary tract and bladder infections.
- You will be able to feel hemorrhoids and may notice itching, bleeding or pain while having a bowel movement. Hemorrhoids are common during pregnancy. The strain of pushing during your baby's birth may cause more swelling. Hemorrhoids are usually most painful during the first few days following the birth of your baby. During this time, there are several ways you can make yourself more comfortable. These include using a donut-shaped pillow to sit on, taking sitz baths, using Tucks or suppositories, and changing your diet. Try to avoid foods such as sweets and cheese. Eat more whole grain products, raw fruits and vegetables.
- Most women experience changes in their moods during the time following childbirth. They feel happy one moment and weepy the next. No one is sure of the cause. (It is called "post-partum depression.") It may be your body's reaction to the end of the pregnancy, the result of sudden hormone changes, or tiredness from childbirth. Get as much rest as you can whenever possible.
- Some women have cramps after the birth of their child. These "afterpains," which can last
- 2-5 days, mean your uterus is contracting normally.
- Your breasts will naturally stop producing milk 7-10 days after you give birth. Cold compresses, a supportive bra, or pain reliever (such as aspirin or ibuprofen) may help alleviate the discomfort.

WARNING SIGNS:

Contact a doctor if you are experiencing any of these symptoms:

- **Bleeding:** If bleeding continues to be heavy (more than one sanitary pad in one hour) after the first week, turns bright red after four days, contains clots bigger than a quarter, or has a foul odor, call a doctor. This could be a sign of infection or a sign that the placenta was not fully discharged.
- **Fever:** You may experience an increase in your body temperature for 24 hours after delivery. However, if your temperature goes above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit after the first day following the birth, call a doctor, as this could be a sign of infection.
- **Lower abdominal pain:** After the first 5 days, if you have pain in your lower abdomen, call a doctor. This could be a sign that you did not completely discharge the placenta.

- Pain in chest, leg, or thigh: Sharp pain in your chest, shortness of breath, or concentrated pain in your thigh or calf might indicate a blood clot. Call a doctor. If you are unable to reach a doctor, have a friend or family member take you to the emergency room. If this is not possible, call 911 to take you there.
- Breast abnormalities: If you feel concentrated pain, swelling, tenderness, heat, or a discrete lump in your breast, you may have an infection called “mastitis.” Call a doctor as soon as possible so you can get treatment before the infection gets worse.
- Post-partum Depression: If your “blues” persist for more than two weeks, or if you feel depressed, tired, lacking energy, or unable to cope with everyday stresses, you should talk to a professional about the possibility that you are experiencing post-partum depression. As many as one in four women experience this after they give birth.
- Difficulty urinating: If you have difficulty urinating, pain or burning when urinating, a need to urinate frequently but not a lot to show for it, dark urine, or any combination of these symptoms, you need to drink more fluids and notify a doctor. You could have a urinary tract infection.

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