

Postpartum Expectations . . . You did it! Now what???

Lochia: Lochia is the vaginal discharge that you will have over the next six weeks. The uterus will be going through a "spring cleaning" and is preparing for your future periods or for your next pregnancy (ha, ha). Expect your bleeding to lessen over the next two weeks. If your bleeding exceeds a pad per hour or your heaviest menstrual day, please call me. The lochia will then change to a brown, then yellow/ white/ clear color over the remaining 6 weeks.

Episiotomy/ Laceration Care: You will go home with a spray specifically made for sore bottoms. The important thing is to continue doing your Sitz baths (4 times a day) at home. This promotes wound healing and dilutes out bacteria that can infect your wound.

Sometimes, a larger episiotomy is required to get the baby out and might involve your rectum. This requires extra care, ie. more frequent Sitz baths and taking stool softeners (over the counter Colace is safe to take).

Breast vs Bottle Feeding: There is no right way or one way to feed your baby. Plenty of people will give you their advice and ideas on what is "the best" way to nourish your child. As long as you are happy with your choice and the baby is gaining weight, you have made the right choice for you.

If you decide to nurse, that's great! But it requires a lot of work and is going to suck a lot of energy out of you ... no pun intended. On average, your baby will want to nurse every 2 to 3 hours. This means you will not ever be able to sleep more than 3 hours at a time. Sleep deprivation will make anyone crazy, so if your baby has a good suck, seriously consider either supplementation with formula or pump your milk so that someone else can get up in the middle of the night to feed the baby while you sleep for a solid 6 hour stretch. Being well-rested will make a huge difference on your mothering experience and on your relationships with others. Trust me on this. If your breast fed baby is not a bottle snob, this will free you up to run errands, take your other children out, or go on a date!

Mastitis vs Engorgement: If you are not breast feeding, you will need to wear a tight-fitting bra (like a sports bra) to minimize milk production. Also, put something cool against your breasts like cabbage leaves or a frozen bag of vegetables. If you are nursing and develop pain in either breast, you may have either an infection or engorgement. Engorgement is more common and treatment is supportive, ie. Tylenol, warm compresses, massage, and continued nursing. Mastitis or a breast abscess is less common and is accompanied by fever and chills. Please call the office to be evaluated if you develop these more serious symptoms.

Depression: If you are tearful, anxious, irritable, you could have the Postpartum Blues. Postpartum Blues are very normal up until the 6th week after having the baby. If your depression continues beyond 6 weeks, you may have Postpartum Depression. Please call me if you think you may have postpartum depression. Ways to prevent the Blues or Depression: 1) use the help people offer; 2) try to sleep a 6 hour stretch; ie. have someone else give the baby a feeding in the middle of the night; 3) start exercising; 4) socialize (get out of the house!). You may or may not need short-term antidepressants to help.

Intercourse: Wait 4 to 6 weeks if possible. If you are not on any form of birth control and have unprotected intercourse, you CAN get pregnant, regardless of nursing. Nursing is not a form of birth control.

Birth Control: If you are nursing, your options are condoms, progestin-only birth control pills, IUD, vasectomy (permanent), tubal ligation (permanent).

If you are bottle feeding, your options are condoms, birth control pills, patch, vaginal ring, IUD, vasectomy (permanent), tubal ligation (permanent).

*If you decide to get your tubes tied, we can do this in the office after your 6 week postpartum exam.

If you are interested in this method, please let me know so that we can give you a necessary progesterone shot before leaving the hospital.

Weight Loss/ Exercise: Remember, it has taken you 9 months to put on your weight. Give yourself a break and don't expect to lose it in 9 weeks! Wait until we see you in the office at your 6 week appointment before you decide to start an exercise regimen.

Circumcision care: Remember, you and your husband requested the circumcision! It will look bruised for about 1-2 weeks. Use ointment on the penis so that the diaper doesn't pull off the scab and hurt the baby. For 3 days, with each diaper change, gently push the skin of the shaft down and slather the head with petroleum jelly so that the foreskin doesn't re-attach to the head of the penis.

Keeping your sanity and your relationships: Remember, you and your partner's relationship came before the baby. It is easy for you to focus all your attention on the baby and not on each other. If you don't make an effort to spend time alone and communicate (without kid(s)), expect your relationship to deteriorate. Plan a date once every week to 2 weeks. Arrange for a babysitter you trust and go out to supper and talk. Do stuff you used to do before the baby. You will be a happier couple.

Cesarean Delivery:

Your staples will come out before you are discharged or in the office. If the steri-strips don't fall off within a week, remove them yourself. The abdominal binder is very helpful and helps support your abdominal wall when you cough, get up out of bed, or walk. If the incision is red or starts draining liquid or pus, please call me at the office.

Constipation: The longer you take Percocet for pain relief, the greater your chance of constipation problems. So try to wean yourself from the Percocet as soon as possible. If constipation is a problem, Miralax, Senekot and Collace are acceptable aids along with prune juice

Driving:

If you have had a cesarean section, do not drive for at least 3 to 4 weeks. If you are on any narcotic medications, you should not be driving. Women who have delivered vaginally should try to avoid driving until 1 to 2 weeks after delivering.

Reality Check: As long as you have a baby, you will never be able to keep a Martha Stewart home. If you expect this of yourself, you will be disappointed and will be unnecessarily aggravated. It's not worth it. Enjoy your family. That's what matters most in the end! Thanks for letting us deliver your baby!!!

Follow up:

Make your postpartum checkup for 6 weeks after your delivery. Our staff would love to meet your baby (or babies!) then; but if that's not possible, don't forget to bring a picture!