The Post-Partum (After Delivery) Patient

This information is to help answer some questions you may have about the healing process and to give you instructions to follow for the next six weeks. If you have any other questions, please ask your OB Care provider or nurse.

General Information:
It is normal for mothers to pass through a temporary period of “The Blues” that may start days or weeks after giving birth. Symptoms include loss of appetite, mood swings, irritability and anxiety. Many mothers will not have this experience. If you are experiencing “The Blues”, remember that they are only temporary. Feel free to talk it over with your OB Care Provider or nurse if you continue to feel “blue” or to ask advice on any questions that may be troubling you.

Bathing and Hygiene:
1. Discharge from your vagina (birth canal) may last a few days to six weeks or more. The color will vary from bright red to light pink to white. This is normal.
2. Use only sanitary pads, no tampons for six weeks.
3. Do not douche or use vaginal suppositories for six weeks.
4. If you have stitches from a tear or an episiotomy use your peri bottle and pour warm water over your stitches after using the bathroom for the first week after delivery. Fill your plastic sitz basin or your bathtub with warm water and sit in it for fifteen minutes three times a day for one week. This will help with soreness. The stitches will absorb. They do not have to be removed.
5. You may wash your hair and take tub baths at any time.

Diet:
1. If you are on a special diet, follow it as prescribed by the doctor or dietician.
2. If you are not on a special diet, continue to eat a balanced diet as discussed with you during your pregnancy. Increasing the amount of fiber (fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods) in your diet will help keep your bowel movements soft. A fiber supplement such as Metamucil, Citrucel or Benefiber can also be added.
3. Drink plenty of fluids, six to eight glasses of water a day. Be sure to drink enough non caffeinated beverages to keep from being thirsty. Especially if you are breastfeeding.

Medication:
1. To promote tissue healing, continue to take your prenatal or multivitamins and iron tablets every day for six weeks.
2. If you have constipation, a mild laxative, such as Milk of Magnesia, or a glass of prune juice may be taken at night if increasing your fluid and fiber intake doesn’t help.
3. If you are prescribed Ibuprofen or Motrin for postpartum pain/cramping, please take with food to lessen gastric discomfort.
Breast Care:
1. If you are breast feeding, wear a nursing bra or a supportive non-binding bra for comfort. To avoid uncomfortable fullness, feed baby frequently (about every 2 hours) for the first week and apply cold ice packs in between feedings for comfort.
2. If you are formula feeding your baby, wear a tight supportive bra night and day for at least one week. Apply cold ice packs to your breasts or place cold cabbage leaves around your breast until the tightness and soreness go away. Also avoid stimulation to your breasts such as the shower water hitting directly on your breasts or using a breast pump.. Both of these will stimulate milk production.

Activity:
1. You may sit up or walk around as you desire during the first week at home.
2. After the first week, you may do light housework. No heavy lifting for at least three weeks.
3. There is no objection to using stairs or riding in a car at any time. You may drive a car after the first week. Do not drive if you are taking pain medicines. They may make you drowsy.

Sex:
1. You may resume sexual relations when you and your partner are comfortable and as directed by your physician. Lubricant may be needed for comfort.
2. It is possible to get pregnant soon after your baby is born. Use the birth control method that you decided on in the hospital before you begin sexual relations. If you are planning on taking the birth control pill or using the patch you should start taking them/applying it on the date you were instructed before leaving the hospital.
3. If you chose to receive a Medroxyprogesterone (Depo-Provera) injection as your birth control method, you will need to receive this injection every 3 months. Your second injection will be due by ____________________.

Exercises:
1. Exercises are necessary to restore strength to your abdominal and pelvic muscles.
2. You can start sit-ups and leg-raising exercises 2-4 weeks after delivery. If you had a postpartum tubal ligation, check with your physician about when you can start these exercises, usually 4-6 weeks.
3. Pelvic and perineal muscles may be strengthened by tightening and releasing the muscles around your vagina, urinary opening, and rectum. These are called “Kegels” exercises. These are the muscles you use when you stop and start your urine stream. You should build up to doing at least 50 Kegels per day.

Call your doctor if you have:
- Redness, warmth or a knot in your lower legs.
- Severe pain in your stomach.
- Heavy bleeding (more than 1-2 pads soaked in one hour) from your birth canal.
- Foul (bad) smelling discharge from vagina (birth canal).
- A fever over 100.4 F orally.
- A lingering depressed mood or you don’t feel like getting out of bed.
- If you feel like harming yourself or others, you should come to the Emergency Room.
- Painful urination.
- Red or swollen area in your breast, especially if you have a fever.

Call 911 if you experience sudden shortness of breath or chest pain.
Follow-up:
If you are breastfeeding, you can call our Lactation Consultant at 706-721-0190 for any questions or concerns or to set up an outpatient appointment if needed.

If you did not receive an appointment to see your OB care provider before leaving the hospital, our call center will call you with your appointment. It is important that you keep this appointment. If there are any questions or problems, call the Women’s Health Clinic at 706-721-4959. After hours and on weekends, phone calls are transferred to an Answering Service and a Physician will return your call.

We have a group that meets weekly for our new mothers called “Mom’s Connection”. Please ask your nurse or call the Mom’s Connection Group Leader at 706-721-8283 for more information.