



# BRINGING HOME BABY

## POSTPARTUM CARE

### Postpartum Care

- The uterus contracts and shrinks after delivery, and should feel round and firm. By 2 weeks after your baby is born you probably won't be able to feel it anymore. You may experience cramping as the uterus contracts. This will lessen and disappear. Nursing moms may notice increased cramping with each baby. Try a heating pad and/or oral pain medication for relief.

### Vaginal Care

- Always wash your hands before and after changing your pads and before holding baby.
- Keep pad clean and dry. Change when moderately soiled.
- Always wipe from front to back to prevent infection.
- If you have stitches, they will dissolve in a few weeks.
- To ease episiotomy (a surgical cut made to ease childbirth) discomfort and promote healing, sit in tub of warm water several times daily. This also helps relieve itching as it heals.
- Apply Dermoplast spray as needed.
- No tampons, douching or intercourse for 4 to 6 weeks.

### Vaginal Flow

- Will last 2 to 6 weeks
- Changes from bright red to pinkish brown to almost whitish in color
- May be heavier when first at home due to increased activity
- If bleeding seems excessive (more than one pad per hour for two hours in a row or passing a clot greater than the size of a plum), check with your doctor.
- Foul odor, fever or increased pelvic pain could indicate an infection — contact your doctor. Odor is usually described as fleshy, musty or earthy.

### Hemorrhoids

- These are blood vessels from the rectum that become filled with blood. They usually improve and disappear after delivery. For comfort:
  - Apply ice pack to rectum
  - Apply topical anesthetic ointment or over-the-counter hemorrhoid pads
  - Increase fluid intake
  - Take stool softeners if ordered by doctor

### Bowel Function

- Regular bowel function usually resumes within three days after delivery.
- Proper fluid intake (8 to 10 glasses per day);
- Increase fiber in diet such as fresh fruits and vegetables, bran, whole wheat breads, prunes or prune juice
- Mild laxative or stool softener may be used
- Light activity such as walking

### Nutrition

- A well balanced diet will help your body replenish nutrients used during pregnancy and give you the energy you need to care for your new baby. Continue to take prenatal vitamins while nursing. If you're not nursing, go ahead and finish your supply.
- Weight loss is most successful if done slowly (1/2 to 1 lb. per week), and is acceptable during nursing if maintaining proper nutrition for your needs and milk supply. It may take 6 to 12 months to lose the weight gained during pregnancy.



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## Baby Blues

Baby blues are caused by mild depression soon after babies are born and attributed to hormonal changes, interrupted sleep and the personal challenges of childbirth. Baby blues usually happens within the first two weeks of delivery.

### Signs of baby blues:

- Weepiness or crying for no apparent reason
- Impatience
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Insomnia (even when the baby is sleeping)
- Sadness
- Mood changes
- Poor concentration

### What to do:

- Talk with someone you trust about how you are feeling.
- Keep a well-balanced diet. Having a new baby may cause you to eat unhealthy foods. Too many simple carbohydrates can make mood swings more pronounced.
- Keep a journal of all your thoughts and feelings.
- Get outside to enjoy fresh air and life outside the world of diapers, feedings and spit up. Sometimes just a different view for a few moments can make a huge difference.
- Ask for help with meals, other children, getting into a routine, or anything that allows you to focus on the joy of having a new baby and not just the pressure of juggling it all.
- Don't expect perfection in the first few weeks. Give yourself time to heal from birth, to adjust to your new baby, and for feeding and sleeping routines to settle in.

Learn more at [americanpregnancy.org/first-year-of-life/baby-blues/](https://americanpregnancy.org/first-year-of-life/baby-blues/)

## Postpartum Depression

Postpartum depression is a mood disorder that can affect women after childbirth. Mothers with postpartum depression experience feelings of extreme sadness, anxiety, and exhaustion that may make it difficult to complete daily care activities for themselves or for others.

Some of the more common symptoms include:

- Feeling sad, hopeless, empty or overwhelmed
- Crying more often than usual or for no apparent reason
- Worrying or feeling overly anxious
- Feeling moody, irritable or restless
- Oversleeping, or being unable to sleep even when baby is asleep
- Having trouble concentrating, remembering details and making decisions
- Experiencing anger or rage
- Losing interest in activities that are usually enjoyable
- Suffering from physical aches and pains, including frequent headaches, stomach problems and muscle pain
- Eating too little or too much
- Withdrawing from or avoiding friends and family
- Having trouble bonding or forming an emotional attachment with baby
- Persistently doubting the ability to care for baby
- Thinking about harming herself or her baby

### How to help postpartum depression:

There are effective treatments for postpartum depression. A woman's health care provider can help choose the best treatment, which may include:

- Counseling/talk therapy: This treatment involves talking one-on-one with a mental health professional (counselor, therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker). Two types of counseling shown to be particularly effective in treating postpartum depression are:
  - Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which helps people recognize and change their negative thoughts and behaviors
  - Interpersonal therapy (IPT), which helps people understand and work through problematic personal relationships