



## Vaginal Delivery Discharge Instructions

### UTERUS

Your uterus will be hard and round and can most often be felt near the navel shortly after birth. It will get smaller very quickly, and after a week will be difficult to feel abdominally. You may feel contractions for a few days. They are most often mild but can be stronger if you have already had several babies. Sometimes, they can feel like labor contractions.

### DIET, URINATION, BOWELS

To avoid constipation (hard stools):

- Eat a high-fiber diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Drink 8 cups (2 liters) of water a day
- Use a stool softener or bulk laxative (not enemas or stimulating laxatives)
- Try eating smaller meals than normal and have healthy snacks in between.

Pee often and drink plenty of fluids to avoid bladder infections.

Any hemorrhoids you develop should slowly decrease in size. To ease discomfort:

- Warm tub baths
- Cold compresses over the area
- Over-the-counter pain relievers
- Over-the-counter hemorrhoid ointments or suppositories (ALWAYS talk to your provider before using any suppositories)

### VAGINAL CARE

You may have bleeding from your vagina for up to 6 weeks. Early on, you may pass some small clots when you first get up. Bleeding will slowly become less red, then pink, and then you will have more of a yellow or white discharge. The pink discharge is called lochia. In most cases, bleeding decreases the most during the first week. It may not stop completely for several weeks. It is not uncommon to have an increase in red bleeding around 7 to 14 days, when the scab forms over the spot where your placenta was shed.

Your menstrual period is likely to return in:

- 4 to 9 weeks after your delivery if you're not breastfeeding.
- 3 to 12 months if you are breastfeeding, and perhaps not for several weeks after you completely stop breastfeeding.
- If you choose to use a contraceptive, ask your provider the effect of the contraceptive on the return of your menses.

Take tub baths or showers, using only plain water. Avoid bubble baths or oils.

Some women have an episiotomy (cut) during the birth. Most women heal from an episiotomy or lacerations without problems, although it may take several weeks. Your stitches do not need to be removed. Your body will absorb them.

## **BREAST CARE**

If you are not breastfeeding, breast engorgement may continue for a few days. To ease discomfort:

- Wear a supportive bra 24 hours a day for the first 1 to 2 weeks.
- Avoid any nipple stimulation.
- Use ice packs to help with the discomfort.
- Take ibuprofen to decrease pain and inflammation.

## **ACTIVITY**

You can return to normal activities, such as light office work or house cleaning, and walking, when you feel ready.

Exercise can help your muscles and improve your energy level. It can help you sleep better and relieve stress. It may help prevent postpartum depression. In general, it's safe to start gentle exercises a few days after a normal vaginal delivery -- or when you feel ready. Aim for 20 to 30 minutes a day at first, Even 10 minutes a day can help. If you feel any pain, stop exercising.

You can start sexual activity around 6 weeks after delivery, if the discharge or lochia has stopped. Women who breastfeed may have a lower sex drive than normal, along with vaginal dryness and pain with intercourse. This is because breastfeeding lowers hormone levels. The same drop in hormones most often prevents your menstrual period from returning for many months. During this time, use a lubricant and practice gentle sex. If sex is still difficult, talk with your provider. Your provider may recommend a hormone cream that can reduce your symptoms. These changes in your body are temporary. After you are done breastfeeding and your menstrual cycle returns, your sex drive and function should return to normal.

Talk with your provider about contraception after pregnancy before you leave the hospital. You may be able to get pregnant as soon as 4 weeks after having a baby. It is important to use effective contraception during this time.

## **MOOD**

In the days or even months after delivery, some moms feel sad, disappointed, tired, or withdrawn. Many of these feelings are normal, and they often will go away. Try talking with your partner, family, or friends about your feelings. If these feelings do not go away or become worse, seek help from your provider.

## **WEIGHT LOSS**

You may lose up to 20 pounds (9 kilograms) over the first 2 weeks after having your baby. After that, weight loss of around one half pound (250 grams) per week is best. Your health care provider can explain more about losing weight after pregnancy.

## WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

You will need a checkup with your provider in 4 to 6 weeks.

Call your provider if you have vaginal bleeding that is:

- Heavier than 1 pad per hour or you have clots that are bigger than a golf ball
- Still heavy (like your menstrual period flow) after more than 4 days, except for the expected increase around 7 to 14 days for a day or so
- Either spotting or bleeding that returns after going away for more than a few days
- Foul odour

Also call your provider if you have:

- Swelling or pain in one of your legs (it will be slightly redder and warmer than the other leg)
- Swelling in your hands, face, or eyes
- Suddenly gain weight over 1 or 2 days, or you gain more than 2 pounds (1 kilogram) in a week.
- Fever more than 37.8°C that persists
- Body pain or achiness
- Increased pain in your belly.
- Increased pain over your episiotomy/laceration or in that area.
- Sadness, depression, withdrawn feeling, feelings of harming yourself or your baby, or inability to care for yourself or your baby.
- A tender, reddened, or warm area on one breast. This may be a sign of infection.
- Have a headache that does not go away or becomes worse.
- Have vision changes, such as you cannot see for a short time, see flashing lights or spots, are sensitive to light, or have blurry vision.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Middlesex London Health Unit :

- <https://www.healthunit.com/>
- Phone: 519-663-5317
- Email: [health@mlhu.on.ca](mailto:health@mlhu.on.ca)
- Strathroy location: Inside Kenwick Mall, 51 Front St. E, Strathroy, ON N7G 1Y5

Lambton Health Unit :

- <https://lambtonpublichealth.ca/>
- Phone: 1-519-383-8331
- Family Health Line: Call 519-383-3817 or 1-800-667-1839 ext. 3817
- Email: [publichealth@county-lambton.on.ca](mailto:publichealth@county-lambton.on.ca)
- Locations:
  - 160 Exmouth St. Point Edward, ON N7T 7Z6
  - 450 Blanche St. Petrolia ON
  - 59 King St. W. Forest ON