

# Your Recovery After Cesarean Birth

After you give birth, a nurse will check you and answer any questions you may have. During your stay, the nurses will teach you how to care for yourself and your baby.

## Changes in Your Body

- A nurse will feel your abdomen to check your uterus while you are in the hospital. If your uterus is soft, your nurse will rub your abdomen to help the uterus become firm.
- It is normal to have cramping of the uterus, called afterbirth pains. This often lasts for several days and may be worse during breastfeeding.
- You will have bleeding from your vagina for 2 to 4 weeks. During the first few days, the bleeding is like a heavy menstrual period. You may pass small blood clots. The bleeding will decrease and change to pink, dark brown, and then clear. Do not use tampons. Use sanitary pads.
- Your breasts will become full and may be tender as they fill with milk, usually 3 to 5 days after you have your baby. Breastfeeding your baby often can help relieve this discomfort.
- You may have constipation. A stool softener or laxative may be ordered. Drink plenty of water and eat lots of fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Tell your nurse if you have problems urinating.

## Activity

- Deep breathe and cough every two hours to prevent breathing problems. Hold a pillow or folded blanket over your incision when you cough to lessen the pain.
- Ask the staff for help the first few times you get out of bed.
- Sit up for a couple of minutes before you start to walk. If you feel light headed or dizzy while in the bathroom, pull the emergency call light on the bathroom wall for help.
- Walk in the hallways 3 to 4 times a day. Slowly increase your activity as you are able.

## Diet

You may feel tired and hungry. You will get fluids through an IV (intravenous) in your hand or arm until you are drinking well.

Once you feel able, you will be given solid food as your doctor allows.

If you are nauseous up after surgery, you may be given medicine.

## Pain Control

Pain is normal. It is the most intense the first 2 to 3 days after surgery. Your doctor will order pain medicine for you. Ask for pain medicine when you need it.

Manage your pain so you can care for yourself, your baby and be active. The medicine may not get rid of the pain but it will make it better.

## Incision

A dressing will be placed over the incision for about 24 hours. Your nurse will check the dressing and change it as needed. After the dressing is taken off, you may shower.

Tapes, called steri strips, will be placed over the incision. Do not pull them off. They may get loose, curl, and fall off on their own. If they have not fallen off in 7 to 10 days, you may remove them.

Your nurse will show you how to care for your incision before you go home.

Watch your incision for signs of infection such as redness, swelling, pain, warmth and drainage.

## Peri Care

Keep the area around your vagina and anus, called the **perineal area**, clean to prevent infection and stop odor. This is called **peri care**. You will be given a plastic bottle to fill with warm water.

Each time you use the toilet, use the plastic bottle to squirt warm water over your perineal area. Change your sanitary pad each time you use the toilet. Wash your hands with soap and water.

## Showering

After the dressing and the catheter in your bladder are removed, you may shower. A shower may feel good and help you relax. Have someone help you with your first shower.

**Do not** take a tub bath because of the risk of infection for 4-6 weeks or until you see your doctor for your follow up visit.

## Going Home from the Hospital

Your nurse will help you prepare to go home with your baby. Information will be given to you on how to care for yourself and your baby.

### Your care may include:

- Limit climbing stairs to 1-2 times each day.
- Lift not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds.
- Get help doing housework for at least 2 weeks.
- Do not drive a car for at least 2 weeks.
- Do not have sexual relations until approved by your doctor. Talk to your doctor about birth control. Breastfeeding does not prevent you from becoming pregnant.
- Do not go back to work until approved by your doctor.

## **Call your doctor right away if you have:**

- A fever over 101 degrees F or 38 degrees C
- Signs of a breast infection such as fever, tenderness, redness, or a hot, hardened area, on one or both breasts
- Heavy vaginal bleeding where you soak one sanitary pad per hour for 2 hours or have large blood clots
- Foul smelling vaginal discharge. Normal discharge smells like your menstrual period
- Problems urinating including trouble starting, burning or pain
- No bowel movements for 3 days
- A hot, hard spot in your leg or pain in our lower leg
- Severe pain or pain that gets worse
- Headache not helped by medicine
- Severe pain in the stomach or upper abdomen
- A headache, blurred vision or spots before your eyes that will not go away
- Feelings of being very sad, having crying spells or mood swings that last longer than 2 weeks

Call your doctor the first few days after your get home to schedule a follow up visit in 4 to 6 weeks. Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

## **Call 911 if you have:**

- Chest pain, trouble breathing, or a seizure.
- Heavy bleeding that won't stop.
- Thoughts of harming yourself or others.
- Any other medical emergency