

Post-Partum Health Tips

Recovering From Birth

After giving birth, you will notice changes in your body, activity level, and diet.

Body

- Your vagina usually will bleed for 2-4 weeks. During the first few days, it can be like a heavy menstrual period. You may pass small blood clots. The bleeding will be less and change to pink, dark brown, and then clear. Do not use tampons. Use sanitary pads.
- Your breasts will fill with milk 3-5 days after you give birth and become firm and sore. They may leak at times.
- You may get constipation (hard to have a bowel movement).

Activity

- Ask for help the first few times you get out of bed.
- Sit for several minutes before you start to walk.
- Try to walk at least 3-4 times per day for 5-10 minutes.

Diet

- After giving birth you may feel tired and hungry.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- It is important to start with light foods at first before moving back to your normal diet.



Pain and cramping are normal after giving birth. Stitches may burn or sting. Ask for pain medicine if you need it. Manage your pain so you can care for yourself and your baby. Try these tips to manage pain in the area around your vagina and anus (called the *perineal* area):

- Place an ice pack on your perineal area the first day for short amounts of time to reduce pain and swelling.
- Take a warm bath, starting 24 hours after giving birth.
- Apply a spray or cream medicine to help with pain from hemorrhoids.

For more information call Customer Service at **(415) 615-4555**.

Or visit www.healthysanfrancisco.org

In the First Few Weeks After Giving Birth:

- Limit climbing stairs to 1-2 times each day.
- Lift nothing heavier than your baby.
- Get help doing housework for at least 2 weeks.
- Do not have sexual relations. Talk to your provider about birth control. Breastfeeding does not prevent you from becoming pregnant.
- Do not go back to work until approved by your provider.

Call your provider *right away* if you have:

- A fever over 101°F.
- 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 two hours or have large blood clots.
- Bad smelling vaginal discharge.
- Problems peeing, like trouble starting, burning, or pain.
- No bowel movements for 3 days.
- A hot, hard spot in your leg, or pain in your lower leg.
- Severe or constant pain or cramping.
- A headache, blurred vision, or spots before your eyes that will not go away.
- Feelings of being very sad, or like you want to hurt yourself or your baby.

Call your provider the first few days after you get home to schedule a follow up visit in 3-6 weeks.



Breastfeeding

- Breastfeeding is healthiest for you and your baby. The first week or two of breastfeeding can sometimes be hard. Ask for help if you need it, and don't wait! You and your baby will be much happier if you get help without delay.
- For breastfeeding help you can call your prenatal provider. Another good resource is an organization called La Leche League International. For information and support go to their website: www.llli.org
- San Francisco Health Plan can also help you with breastfeeding resources and information.

Adapted from:

"Your Recovery After Vaginal Birth"
www.healthinfotranslations.org

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