# post-delivery period

## after birth

You spent about nine months getting used to being pregnant. Now you are a non-pregnant woman again – a mother!

Being a mother is a big change in your life. This is true even when you want the baby and are ready for the responsibility. You may not have a "feeling of motherhood" right away. That feeling develops as you and your baby get to know each other. In fact, you may have mixed feelings about being a mother. These feelings may be good or bad.

Physical changes are part of adjusting. It can take from six weeks to three months for your body to return to normal. Right from the start, try not to do too much. There are a number of things you may worry about.

## *Here are a few tips to help you:*

Share your concerns with someone. Find a person who you can talk to about your feelings. Try to get together with some of the women from your classes after you have your babies. You are all going through the same stages together. Experienced mothers can also give good advice. Just knowing that you are not alone can be a big help.

### *Don't expect too much.*

You may feel that you are not sure of how to take care of a newborn. All parents have to be "first timers" at infant care. So be prepared to be un-prepared, and be patient. You will learn by doing.

Most first-time parents have never seen a newborn baby before. You should be ready for some surprises. For example, you may not know why your baby is crying and at first, your baby does not smile at you.
Your friends who are parents can tell you how their baby looked. They also know how babies act the first few weeks.

Read about being a parent. There are several good books that you can get. Ask your health care provider for suggestions.

### *If people offer help—accept it.*

This is a special time for you, the father, and the baby to be together. You will be able to care for the baby, but it is nice to have extra help at home. Someone else can do the household chores. Accept the fact that some things will not get done. And be careful. Avoid lifting objects heavier than the baby and avoid climbing stairs the first few weeks.

### *Try to limit your visitors the first few weeks.*

Many people will want to see your new baby. This can tire you out quickly. Try to space the time between visitors.
If your visitors are sick, ask them to come back when they are feeling better. You do not have to be a super hostess.
These visitors may want to help you. Let them.

### *If you do not feel well or have pain, call your health care provider.*

It is normal to feel tired, but you should not feel sick. If you have any of these problems, call your health care provider at once.

- Very heavy or sudden increases in bleeding from your vagina (this would be more than a menstrual period. Soaking more than two sanitary napkins in a half-hour is heavy.)
- A discharge from your vagina with a strong, unpleasant smell
- An oral temperature of 101 degrees or higher
- Red and/or painful breasts
- Loss of appetite for a long period of time
- Pain, redness, tenderness and/or swelling of your legs
- Pain in your lower stomach or your back

## *Advice will come from everyone.*

**Listen to the well meaning "advice givers" and then follow what seems sensible to you. Do what fits into your lifestyle and your ideas about parenting.**

## *Don't ignore signs of being tired.*

**Tune into the signs your body gives you about being tired. Many women are surprised by how tired they feel during the first few months. Adjust your schedule to fit your baby's. Try taking a nap or rest when the baby does.**

## *Weight loss after birth is something most women welcome.*

**It is normal to lose 10 to 15 pounds right after birth. This will depend on how much of the weight is water. You will have more weight to lose, but diet later. Your body needs a well-balanced diet to help you keep up your energy level and good health. You have about seven pounds of fat stored in your body. This gives you an energy reserve for about the first three months. These extra pounds will gradually come off. You need to eat properly and get adequate exercise. If you are breastfeeding, it is important for you to eat right. Your diet provides the nutrients your baby needs. Your body will burn up to 1,000 calories a day just making milk, so you need to eat an extra 500 calories a day (such as a turkey and cheese sandwich and a glass of milk). You also need to drink more fluids. This helps your body make milk.**

## *Ask your health care provider when you should start your post delivery exercises.*

**Exercise is a must to get your body's tone and flexibility back. Exercise on a regular basis. Try to do your prenatal exercises. The ones to strengthen your stomach and relax are good.**

## *Birth control is needed.*

**Breastfeeding or not having your period will not protect you from getting pregnant. If you are breastfeeding, you should not use the combined birth control pill. Your partner can use condoms, or you can use birth control foam or jelly. Ask your health care provider about other choices at your post delivery checkup.**

## *"Baby blues" is not a joke.*

**It is normal to feel blue and a little let down after the excitement of pregnancy and delivery. "Baby blues" usually lasts no longer than a week or two. Your hormones are changing after the birth of your baby. The hormone changes are a major reason why you feel blue. Your changing role with your partner and the baby's constant needs all can add to the "baby blues." You might resent the ways the baby has changed your life. This could make you feel angry and guilty. It is a normal feeling that all parents have. Talk to your health care provider if feeling "blue" concerns you.**

## *Two is company, three's a crowd.*

**Now there is a new person in your lives. The baby will change the way both of you feel about yourselves, and it may change how you relate to each other. Making the change from "couple" to "family" can cause some tensions. A man often feels that the baby gets all the attention and may feel somewhat left out. Talking with each other can prevent some problems and solve others. It is sometimes hard for other children to accept the new baby. They may think the baby is taking away all their mother's attention. Set aside a special time for the other children.**

## *Finally, keep your sense of humor.*

**There will be good days and bad days. Do whatever you can to enjoy your new baby.**

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