

After Birth: Your Recovery and Warning Signs Guide

Maternal & Newborn · Postpartum

Your body heals over about 6 weeks after birth. Most people recover well, but some serious problems start after you go home, so know the warning signs.

Your bleeding

- It goes from red to pink or brown to whitish, and stops by about 4 to 6 weeks.
- **Soaking a pad in 1 hour is not normal.**

Care for your stitches or incision

- After using the toilet, rinse with warm water from a squirt bottle.
- Use ice packs for the first 24 hours. Then sit in a warm, shallow bath (sitz bath).
- After a cesarean: keep the cut clean and dry, and lift nothing heavier than your baby.

Ease pain and rest

- Take ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and acetaminophen (Tylenol) as directed.
- For constipation: drink fluids, eat fiber, walk, and use your stool softener.
- Wear a supportive bra. Rest when your baby sleeps. Keep taking your prenatal vitamin, and iron if prescribed.

Your feelings

- Crying and mood swings in the first 2 weeks are common (baby blues).
- **Sadness or worry lasting more than 2 weeks needs a call.**

Sex, birth control, and checkups

- You can get pregnant before your period returns. Use birth control.
- Wait for sex until your provider says it is safe, usually 6 weeks.
- Keep your checkups. The first is usually within 3 weeks.

Call your provider today if you have

- Bleeding that soaks 1 pad an hour, or clots the size of an egg or bigger
- An incision that is not healing
- A red, swollen, or painful leg
- A temperature of 100.4 F (38 C) or higher
- A headache that does not get better, or with vision changes
- If you cannot reach your provider, call 911.

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- Chest pain
- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- A seizure
- Thoughts of hurting yourself or your baby
- **Tell them you recently had a baby.**

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclexpace.com/patient-education/postpartum-care-warning-signs/patient

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