

What is normal after vaginal birth?

Information for women after a vaginal birth



Peninsula
Health

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Your stay in hospital after birth

Your length of stay will depend on the type of birth you have and if you require any medical treatment. Most women will stay between six and 24 hours after birth.

Midwives will provide most of your care and a doctor will be involved when care plans need to be made or changed.

What happens after I have my baby?

Once your baby is born, they are usually placed on your chest and will remain there until after the first feed. This is done to maintain baby's temperature, promote bonding and help encourage your baby to move to the breast for their first feed.

If there are any concerns about how your baby coped with birth, the paediatric staff may need to take your baby to review on the cot in your room.

Visitors

We advise minimal visiting in the first 24 hours after birth as this allows time to rest, recover and learn many new things that you will need to know before going home. Ask your visitors to check with the hospital about any restrictions.

Support and education

Midwives give you care and support by:

- Observing you and baby to make sure you are both well
- Teaching you skills to care for your baby
- Helping you with breastfeeding
- Listening to your concerns and offering suggestions
- Providing advice and support with early parenting (e.g. bathing, safe baby sleeping, settling, safety and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome SIDS)
- Discussing contraception

What happens before I go home?

The midwife will organise the paperwork that you need

Staff will advise you regarding home visiting and give you a day that the Home Care team will visit. You need to make sure you are available all day.

If you are on medications and require a script, you will be given a script and information about the medications.

You will be directed to take your baby to see your doctor for a check-up at six weeks post birth or earlier if required.

When a midwife visits your home we ask:

- Your pets are restrained
- No one smokes during the visit
- No one has used drugs
- You let us know when we contact you if someone in the household is unwell
- If you have safety concerns, please let us know before you leave the hospital

When you go home:

- You are able to attend to your own hygiene and your baby's needs.
- You are able to eat and drink an adequate amount.
- You are able to pass urine without difficulty.
- Know how to care for your perineum and when to seek help.

What is normal in the first six weeks?

After pains: You can feel contraction-type pain for a number of days after birth especially if you are breastfeeding. You can use heat packs and analgesia to help with the discomfort.

Bleeding: Initially your blood loss is like a heavy period, it will be bright red and you will need to change your pad every 2 – 3 hours. This will reduce over time and become darker. Most women will have little or no blood loss after 2-4 weeks.

Perineum care and stitches: Please see the information leaflet perineal care.

Haemorrhoids: Some women will experience haemorrhoids after the birth. These are swollen veins around the anus. They often clear up a few weeks after birth. Things you can do to assist:

- Work on your pelvic floor exercises
- Don't strain on the toilet
- Wear firm supportive underwear
- Rest, with your legs raised on a pillow
- Use a haemorrhoid ointment.

If they do not improve see your doctor

Incontinence: This is not uncommon and about one third of pregnant women may experience some form of incontinence either while pregnant or after birth.

What can I do?

- Pelvic floor exercises
- Ask for a physiotherapy review
- Talk to your midwife in hospital
- If it does not improve see your doctor

Back Pain: It can be common to experience some back pain after birth. (on your doctors' advice?) You can relieve this with anti-inflammatory medications. Ask for help from friends and family. Keep active but be aware of positioning yourself carefully when you are feeding, holding changing or bathing your baby so you don't strain your back.

Exhaustion and interrupted sleep: Most new parents will feel exhausted for some periods of time during the first year after the birth of their baby. It is a time to ask for help and support from family and friends.

Babies' sleep patterns vary with some settling easily and others taking a long time to settle.

Babies need to feed frequently and most will continue to wake several times at night over the first three months. Many babies will continue to wake once or twice at night up to a year of age.

Accept help that is offered
Talk about how you are feeling
Have some time out from looking after your baby if possible
Join a new parent's group

Depression: Postnatal depression is a common debilitating condition that can affect parents following the birth of their baby. It can be long lasting and requires treatment and support.

It is different to the **baby blues** which are common and usually occur between day three and day seven of birth. You may experience mood swings tearfulness or feeling overwhelmed. It is thought that it is due to rapidly changing hormone levels following the birth of your baby. If symptoms don't go after a few days, it is important to speak to a health professional as you may be experiencing symptoms of depression.

Symptoms of depression

- Feeling low or numb or nothing at all
- Lack of interest and/or pleasure in life.
- No energy – finding it difficult to cope and get through the day (may also be attributed to lack of sleep)
- Loss of confidence, feeling helpless, hopeless and worthless
- often feeling close to tears, highly sensitive to other's comments or emotional
- Feeling angry, irritable or resentful towards other.
- Changes in sleep – not being able to sleep even when you have the opportunity, or conversely, wanting to sleep all the time
- Changes in appetite – accompanied by weight loss or weight gain
- Difficulties concentrating, thinking clearly or making decisions
- Feeling isolated, alone and disconnected from others
- Having thoughts of harming yourself, baby and/or other children.

Talk to your doctor for more information

When do I need to seek help?

Present to the hospital emergency with any of the following

- **Significant worsening of pain where?**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Painful swelling in legs or calves**
- **Fever/chills/nausea/vomiting**
- **Large increase in vaginal bleeding**
- **Offensive smelling discharge**
- **Difficulty urinating or pain around the kidneys/flank**

Contact Numbers

If you have general or non-urgent enquiries please contact:

- Ward on (03) 9784 7450
OR
- Your local doctor

If you feel it is an emergency

- Call the ambulance immediately on 000
OR
- Present to the nearest Emergency Department

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Disclaimer: The information contained in the brochure is intended to support, not replace, discussion with your doctor or health care professionals.

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