



Common Postpartum Discomforts

Bleeding

You may stop bleeding and then restart bright red bleeding several times during the first six weeks after delivery. Called "lochia," bleeding and discharge can occur in 3 stages. The first stage is red, lasting for about 3 days. The second is watery-pink, lasting for 1-3 weeks, and the third is yellowish-white, lasting another 3-6 weeks. Change sanitary pads frequently. Passing clots is also common during the postpartum period. Clots can be bright red, dark red, small or large and are frequently associated with severe cramping. Ibuprofen helps with the pain. Call for excessive bleeding, soaking one pad per hour with bright red blood or continuing to pass large clots.

Cesarean Incision

Your scar may pucker and be tender for 2-3 months as it heals. It is common to feel numbness up to the umbilicus for 6 months. The edges of the incision may be more swollen than the center because of knots used to close the layers located at the sides of the incision. It is normal for the pain to be worse on one side than the other. The top of the incision frequently hangs over the lower edge during the healing process until the lymphatic system begins to function normally. Call the office if the incision becomes red, more inflamed, more tender, or begins to leak fluid. Please remove steri-strips or glue from the incision one week after delivery. They are easiest to remove after a shower or bath.

Constipation

Hormonal changes, dehydration, breast-feeding and inactivity cause constipation. Try increasing the fiber in your diet, drinking more water, and using stool softeners.

Cramping

These are due to the uterus contracting as it returns to normal size. These may be increased with breastfeeding. We recommend changing your position often, emptying your bladder often, using a heating pad, and taking ibuprofen to help with the contractions.

Depression and Emotional Changes

It is normal to feel overwhelmed, exhausted and sleep deprived. The lifestyle changes, exhaustion, and fluctuating hormones frequently cause anxiety and feelings of helplessness. After delivery, your body will undergo many changes. The demands of a new baby, and not enough sleep may lead to feelings of depression. For most women, these feelings may only last 4-7 days. Resting, maintaining a good diet, and planning time for you away from baby are important. Ask for help from your family and friends. If depression persists longer, or seems more severe, schedule an appointment with your doctor. Good Samaritan Hospital has an excellent support group (559-2508).

Episiotomy

Use ice packs the first 1-2 days. Taking a warm bath, using a sitz bath, a spray bottle, or a rubber ring may also help. As you heal, you may notice the stitches beginning to pull and

itch. Swelling decreases so the stitches begin to loosen. The body absorbs sutures used in repairing an episiotomy over the next 6 weeks.

Hair Loss

Thinning hair is normal postpartum, with the most noticeable change 5-6 months after delivery.

Hemorrhoids

Keep your stools soft by using a stool softener. Try Preparation H, Anusol creams, and using a spray bottle after bowel movements. Do not over wipe. Consider Tucks pads and baby wipes.

Hormonal Changes

It is common after delivery to experience hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings and vaginal dryness similar to what women experience in early menopause. Your estrogen level drops with delivery and is reduced until you finish nursing and your regular menses resumes. If the symptoms are troublesome, you can discuss estrogen replacement with your physician. A small dose of oral or transdermal (patch) estrogen will reduce the vasomotor symptoms of hot flashes and night sweats. If vaginal dryness is the only symptom, vaginal estrogen cream can be prescribed.

Hot Flashes

Hot flashes occur frequently when nursing. The body treats nursing like menopause with all the same symptoms due to lack of estrogen. Hot flashes, depression, and vaginal dryness all increase during breast-feeding. Starting a combination oral contraceptive pill or using an estrogen patch usually helps decrease the symptoms. If you are nursing, the estrogen in the pill may decrease milk supply. Vaginal estrogen does not affect nursing.

Leg Swelling

It is normal for your legs to swell after the delivery. There are large fluid shifts after delivery. This usually resolves by your 6-week postpartum check.

Sex

If you had a cesarean section or a vaginal delivery without an episiotomy, you may attempt intercourse four weeks after delivery. If you had a vaginal delivery with an episiotomy or laceration, wait until after your postpartum visit. You may need to use lubrication (Astroglide or KY Jelly), especially if you are breastfeeding.

Engorged Breasts

Try using ice packs and wearing a sports bra or nursing bra all the time. If you are nursing, your body should regulate the engorgement within the first few weeks. Nursing is supply and demand. If you are not breastfeeding, avoiding stimulation of the breasts.

Urinary Leakage

Urinary stress incontinence is caused by decreased perineal muscle tone and lack of estrogen. Do Kegel exercises to reverse the process. Using estrogen vaginally (prescription) can also help restore the tissue if dryness is an issue.

Vaginal dryness

Breast-feeding causes vaginal dryness. Lubrication may help the symptoms. It can be treated with prescription estrogen products that are placed vaginally.