

## STRONG MIDWIFERY GROUP

### GENERAL POSTPARTUM INSTRUCTIONS

#### VAGINAL BIRTH

- 1) Activity:** Restrict unnecessary physical activity for two weeks, and then gradually increase your activity. Do not become overtired. For the first two weeks at home, try to rest in the morning and in the afternoon. (If you stay in your pajamas, people might bring you food!) Limit your travel and driving during the first two weeks.
- 2) Diet:** Eat a well balanced diet, rich in protein and calcium. Continue your prenatal vitamins and iron supplements until your post-partum appointment. Breastfeeding mothers: drink 8-oz. of fluid at every breast feeding.
- 3) Bathing:** You may shower or bathe as desired and wash your hair. Many women notice increased hair loss after they have a baby.
- 4) Bowel Habits:** Avoid constipation by eating foods rich in fiber such as fruits, vegetables, and bran. Drink plenty of fluids. If you have not had a bowel movement by your fourth day at home, you may take a mild laxative such as Milk of Magnesia.
- 5) Bleeding:** It is entirely normal to have bloody vaginal discharge, called lochia, which varies from woman to woman and can last as long as 4 – 6 weeks. Some women have increased bleeding 10 – 14 days after the baby is born. You may find that the amount of discharge increases as you stand from a lying position, or after activity. It is also normal for your vaginal flow to increase with breast-feeding. If your bleeding becomes heavy, or has a foul odor, contains large clots, or is accompanied by severe cramps, please call us.
- 6) Care of stitches:** Use your peri-bottle to keep the area clean. You may also want to sit in the bathtub for 15 minutes, 2 – 3 times a day if very sore. You may continue to use the spray on your stitches, putting some also on your pads. Change your pads often, more frequently on days your discharge is heavier. If your stitches become red, swollen, painful or open up, call us.
- 7) Breastfeeding:** Between 2 and 3 days after the birth, your breasts will swell and you will begin to make milk. The breasts may become hard and sore during this short period of engorgement (3 – 5 days). To decrease your discomfort and make it easier for your baby to nurse, we recommend the following:
  - a) Nurse your baby frequently, every 2 – 3 hours.
  - b) Wear a bra with good support.
  - c) Use cold packs, such as packages of frozen peas, as soon as the swelling begins. Apply 3 – 4 times a day for 20 minutes. Or, place a cold green cabbage leaf over the breast to decrease engorgement.
  - d) Take Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) 600mg every 6 hours around the clock to reduce inflammation.
  - e) Massage the breast gently before nursing and express some milk first to allow the baby to latch on more easily. Try massaging in a warm shower.
  - f) Use a nipple cream, such as the lanolin-based Pure-Lan or Lansinoh (available at stores or pharmacies). You do not need to wash these creams off before nursing.
  - g) Expose your nipples to air several times a day, especially after feeding.
  - h) Call the office if you have severe breast or nipple pain, if your breast has red streaks, or if your nipples are bleeding.

**8) Bottle-feeding:** your breasts will probably become full and sore about 3 days after delivery. There is no medicine to “dry up” your milk. Bind your breasts tightly with a towel, ace bandage, or bra. To decrease discomfort, use cold packs and take Ibuprofen. The discomfort usually lasts for only a few days. Don’t express milk.

**9) Sexual Intercourse:** Resume sexual intercourse only when vaginal bleeding has stopped and when you are comfortable. If intercourse is initially painful, you may need to wait a bit longer (usually after your 6 week check up). You may use additional lubrication such as K-Y Jelly or Astroglide. You may wish to use condoms to decrease your risk of infection or pregnancy.

**10) Menstruation:** Women who are bottle-feeding will resume their normal pattern of periods by 2 – 3 months. The first several periods may be different than the ones before the baby. Breast-feeding women will probably not begin periods until several months have passed. Remember, you may be able to get pregnant even before your first period, so use birth control.

**11) Contraception: *REMEMBER*,** it is possible to get pregnant as early as 1 month after your birth. Contraceptive pills may be started shortly after delivery. Other methods to be used before returning to the office are foams or condoms; both are available without a prescription. If you want a diaphragm, it can usually be fitted at your post-partum visit. Some methods of birth control may not be covered by your insurance, so check with your insurer.

**12) Postpartum Examination: *PLEASE* call our office soon after hospital discharge to schedule an appointment in 4 – 6 weeks if you did not receive an appointment prior to going home.**

**13) Employment:** You may return to work after 4 – 6 weeks. Should you wish to return sooner, please discuss this with one of the midwives.

**14) Call if the following occur:**

- \*Fever or chills. (Check your temperature with a thermometer before calling).
- \*Excessively heavy or prolonged bleeding (soaking a large pad every hour).
- \*Frequency or burning with urination.
- \*Swelling, tenderness with redness in one area of breast, cracking or bleeding nipples.
- \*Marked depression or anxiety
- \*Severe abdominal pain, not relieved by Tylenol or Ibuprofen.

**BEFORE YOU CALL FOR ANY PROBLEMS, BE SURE TO HAVE THE TELEPHONE NUMBER OF YOUR PHARMACY AVAILABLE, AS WELL AS A PENCIL AND PAPER.**

**Strong Midwifery Group  
(585) 275 – 7892**

**RAMP Office  
(585) 275 – 2962**

**Answering Service  
(585) 258 – 4970**