

In this document, we use terms such as “mother” or “father”. However, parenting takes on many forms and some parents may wish to use other terms. We also use “breastfeeding” while some prefer “chestfeeding”. If this applies to you, please let us know and we will respect the terms you identify with.

Congratulations on your new baby! After a caesarean section, or C-section, you will probably need about 6 weeks or more to fully recover but each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to get better as quickly as possible.

Activity

- If you can, rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
- Try to walk each day and walk a little more each day. Walking boosts blood flow and helps prevent pneumonia, constipation, and blood clots in your legs.
- Avoid strenuous activity, such as biking, jogging, weightlifting, and aerobic exercise for 6 weeks or until your doctor says it is okay.
- Until your doctor says it is okay, do not lift anything heavier than your baby and their car seat.
- Do not do sit-ups or other abdominal exercises for 6 weeks or until your doctor says it is okay.
- You may shower as usual. Pat the incision dry when you are done. Do not bathe until your incision is well healed and your vaginal bleeding has stopped, usually by about 6 weeks after your surgery.
- Vaginal bleeding is normal after having a baby. Wear sanitary pads but do not use tampons until your doctor says it is okay.
- You may drive when you are:
 - Comfortable with a seatbelt across your hips and belly.
 - Comfortable with shoulder checking, slamming on the breaks, and reacting quickly if needed.
 - No longer taking narcotic pain medications (such as Tylenol #3, Percocet, etc.). Note that other pain medications, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or anti-inflammatories, such as ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve) are OK to drive on since they do not cause sleepiness.
- You will probably need to take at least 6 weeks off work. This will depend on the type of work you do and how you feel.
- We usually recommend waiting until after your 6-week postpartum check before you have intercourse again; many patients may take longer to feel ready for intercourse which can be very normal.

Diet

- You can eat your normal diet. If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, chicken, toast, and yogurt.
- Drink plenty of fluids unless your doctor tells you not to.
- It is common for your bowel movements to be irregular right after your surgery. Try to avoid constipation and straining with bowel movements. You may want to take a fiber supplement (e.g. Metamucil or Benefiber) each day. If you have not had a bowel movement after a couple of days, you can also try a laxative (e.g Restoralax or Lax-A-Day); these are safe in breastfeeding patients.

Medicines

- Your doctor will tell you if and when you can restart your medicines. He or she will also give you instructions about taking any new medicines.
- Take prescription pain medicines as directed. If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine instead.
- If you think your medicine is making you sick to your stomach:

- Take your medicine after meals (unless your doctor has told you not to).
- Ask your doctor for a different pain medicine.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.

Incision care

- If you have strips of tape on the incision, leave the tape on for a week or until they fall off.
- Wash the area daily with warm, soapy water and pat it dry. Alternatively, you can use a blow dryer on a cool setting to dry the skin. Ensuring the skin is dry can help with healing and can prevent infection.
- Don't use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol, which can slow healing.
- You may cover the area with a gauze bandage or a panty liner / menstrual pad if it weeps or rubs against clothing. Change the bandage or pad at least every day.
- Keep the area clean and dry.

Other instructions

- After a C-section, we do not recommend getting pregnant again for at least 9 months in order to allow your body to fully heal between deliveries.
- If you breastfeed your baby, you may be more comfortable while you are healing if you place the baby so that he or she is not resting on your belly. Try tucking your baby under your arm, with his or her body along the side you will be feeding on. Support your baby's upper body with your arm. With that hand you can control your baby's head to bring his or her mouth to your breast. This is sometimes called the football hold.
- Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. At our clinic, we recommend a 1-week checkup and a 6-week checkup. Be sure to make and go to all appointments and call your doctor or Health Link (811) if you are having problems. It is also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

When should you call for help?

- **Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:
 - You pass out (lost consciousness).
 - You have symptoms of a blood clot in your lung (a pulmonary embolism). These may include: sudden chest pain, trouble breathing, or coughing up blood.
 - You have thoughts of harming yourself, your baby, or another person.
- Call your doctor or Health Link (811) if:
 - You have severe vaginal bleeding. This means that you are soaking through a pad every hour for 2 or more hours.
 - You are dizzy, light-headed, or you feel like you may faint.
 - You have a fever.
 - You have new or more belly pain.
 - You have loose stitches or your incision comes open.
 - You have symptoms of infection such as: increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness; red streaks leading from the incision; pus draining from the incision; a fever.
 - You have symptoms of a blood clot in your leg (a deep vein thrombosis), such as: pain in your calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin; redness and swelling in your leg or groin.
 - Watch closely for changes in your health and be sure to contact your doctor or Health Link if: you feel sad, anxious, or hopeless for more than a few days; you do not get better as expected.

For 24/7 nursing advice and general health information call Health Link at 811.