



CHILDBIRTH SERVICES – AFTER BABY IS BORN

GRAND RIVER HOSPITAL – K-W HEALTH CENTRE

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After Your Baby is Born

Congratulates you on the birth of your baby! We look forward to working with you and helping prepare you to go home.

Welcome to the labour/birth/recovery and post-partum care rooms

In keeping with the philosophy of family-centered care, your baby will be with you in your room 24 hours a day. The nurse will help care for both you and your baby.

Getting to know the staff on the unit

The nurses have special expertise working with childbearing families. Most of the nurses work 12 hour shifts, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. One nurse is assigned to care for you and your baby on each shift, however, you will meet a number of nurses each day. If you ring your call bell while your nurse is caring for another mother, or is on a meal break, another nurse will be happy to help you. Nursing students may also participate in your care.

A doctor will come to see you while you are in hospital. If you had a vaginal birth, the doctor who cared for you during your pregnancy will visit you. If you had a caesarean birth, the obstetrician who completed the operation will check on you.

Making sure your baby is safe and secure

Starting from birth, your job as a parent is to protect your child. Here are some guidelines to follow while in hospital:

- Get to know the staff that takes care of you and your baby. Make sure they tell you their names. The only people who should be taking your baby away from your room are hospital employees with a proper identification card showing their name, their photo and a pink teddy bear on their tag. If you are unsure, call your nurse.
- Ask questions when your baby is taken from your room; you should be given details of the test or procedure, including why it is being done, where, who authorized it, and how long your baby will be gone. Accompany your baby if possible.
- NEVER leave your baby alone in the room. If you plan to leave the room, take your baby to the nurse's desk and let them know your plan.
- Question any person you don't recognize who enters your room and asks about your baby. If you feel uneasy, ring your call bell immediately.

New mothers, one support person and baby will receive identification bands following delivery. Staff will verify these whenever baby is separated from the mother.

Caring for yourself

Your nurse will give you suggestions about what changes to expect in your body and how best to recover from the birth of your baby. She will check you regularly to make sure you are recovering well.

- *Vaginal Discharge (lochia)*

You will be bleeding after the birth of your baby. The flow, called lochia, will last from two to six weeks. The colour and amount will change gradually from bright red to pink to a creamy white. Tell your nurse if your bleeding increases, if you pass any clots, pus, or if your lochia has a bad odour.

- *Uterus*

The uterus expands during pregnancy and it will take some time to shrink back to its normal size. Your nurse will check your uterus every day to make sure it is firm and shrinking. Ask your nurse to show you how to do this so you can check yourself when you go home.

- *Perineum (area between your vagina and rectum)*

You may find that your perineum is swollen from delivery, and sore if you have had stitches. To help you feel comfortable, prevent infection and increase healing, we suggest the following:

- Always wash your hands before and after you touch your perineum.
- Each time you use the toilet, rinse your perineum with warm water using the plastic cleaning bottle after. Use toilet tissue and gently pat the area dry from front to back.
- To decrease stinging while you are urinating, use the plastic bottle to spray water over your perineum at the same time.
- Change your sanitary pad frequently including every time you use the toilet.
- Ask your nurse for an ice pack to put on your perineum to help the swelling for the first 24 hours after birth.

- *Tear or episiotomy*

Stitches dissolve and do not have to be removed. To help heal the area, take frequent showers or gently spray a hand-held showerhead against the area. After a shower, make sure the area is completely dry before putting on your underwear. Pelvic floor or Kegel exercises will also help your perineum to heal by increasing the blood flow to the area and will strengthen the muscles that were stretched during delivery. Your nurse will explain how to do these exercises.

- *Hemorrhoids*

You may have hemorrhoids, which are swollen veins around the rectum. The following tips will help decrease discomfort and promote healing:

- Use ice packs for the first 24 hours.
- Avoid sitting for long periods of time. Lie on your side or abdomen as much as possible.
- Ask your nurse for a special cream or witch hazel compress, such as Tucks.

- *Bowel movements*

You may not have a bowel movement for two to three days after your baby is born. To decrease pulling on your stitches during a movement, try holding a clean sanitary pad over your stitches.

To decrease discomfort from hemorrhoids, keep your bowel movement soft by eating properly. Drink plenty of fluids like water, juice or milk, and avoid tea and colas. Eat fruits, vegetables, whole grain and bran products. Talk to your nurse or physician about taking a stool softener, laxative or using a suppository.

Self-Administration Medication Program (SAM)

What is SAM?

SAM is a program that will allow you to medicate yourself after the delivery of your baby. You will always know what drug you are taking and why you are taking it. If you are not comfortable taking and recording your medication on your own, you may choose not to participate in this program.

What medications come in the SAM package?

The medications in the SAM package are safe to take when breastfeeding and include the following:

1. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 325mg, used to treat pain or discomfort from stitches or sore breasts.
2. Ibuprofen (Motrin) 400mg, effective for cramping pain caused when the uterus decreases in size. *(If you have asthma please discuss this with your nurse prior to taking medication.)*
3. Docusate Sodium (Regulex) 100mg, softens stool, making it more comfortable for you to have a bowel movement while your stitches are healing.
4. Simethicone (Oval) 80mg, helps reduce gas pains after a caesarean delivery.

What is your responsibility with SAM?

You will need to record the times and amounts of medication taken, after your nurse has reviewed the program with you. Before taking any of these medications be sure to alert your nurse of any drug allergies or intolerance you have experienced in the past.

Prior to discharge return your unused medications and medication record to your nurse. Remember, keep all medication out of the reach of children.

Caring for your breasts

Between 48 and 72 hours after your baby's birth, your breasts will probably begin to feel heavier. This is the time your milk comes in. Nurses are available to help you with the care of your breasts.

If you are breastfeeding:

- Breastfeed at least every three hours in the first week, waking baby if necessary, to prevent your breasts from becoming too full.
- Wear a firm-fitting nursing bra with non-elastic straps and no underwire. You do not need to wear it while you are sleeping at night.
- If your breasts feel very full, apply warm compresses for 20 minutes or take a hot shower and let the water run over your breasts before feeding.
- Before you feed your baby, express a little milk to soften nipple and surrounding area so that your baby can latch on. Your nurse can show you how to do this. It is very difficult for your baby to latch onto a firm, swollen breast.
- If you find hard or sore spots in your breast, a milk duct may be clogged. Use a circular motion and massage the sore spots toward your nipple. A warm shower or warm compress may also help. You can take Tylenol if it is too painful.

If you are bottlefeeding:

- Wear a firm-fitting supportive bra with non-elastic straps.
- Apply ice packs to your breast every three to four hours, or warm compresses if these are more soothing. You may take Tylenol if your breasts are too painful.
- Green cabbage leaves worn inside your bra will decrease milk production. Talk to your nurse or lactation consultant in new mother support services for more information.
- Express only enough milk to decrease the pain and pressure because expressing too much will signal your breasts to produce more milk.

Diet Guide

Eat a variety of foods every day as recommended in Canada's Food Guide. If you follow a special diet such as vegetarian, you may want to speak to our dietitian. If you are breastfeeding you need about 500 extra calories a day to help you produce milk. An apple, bran muffin, glass of milk and piece of cheese will provide these calories. Also, remember to drink when you feel thirsty. It takes time, good nutrition, and a balance of physical activity to get back into shape. Crash dieting to lose weight is not recommended. A good quality diet is essential to rebuild nutrient stores after delivery.

Canada Food Guide recommends:

- 2-4 servings of meat, fish, poultry
- 4 servings of milk or milk products (2 if not nursing)
- 5-12 servings of grain products
- 5-10 servings of vegetables and fruit

For more information contact the Healthy Children Information Line at the Community Health Department at (519) 883-2245.

Feelings After Birth

New mothers often experience post-partum blues after delivery. You may feel more sensitive, anxious and/or irritable than usual. You also may cry more often.

These feelings are usually temporary, but if they persist after a couple of weeks, talk to a health care professional such as your family doctor, public health nurse, social worker or a crisis line. You may be the one out of ten women who suffers from post-partum mood disorder. Support is available for new mothers concerned about post-partum blues by calling the Grand River Hospital social work department at 519-749-4300, ext. 2267 or the crisis clinic at 519-749-4300, ext. 2353.

If treated, this illness is temporary. You cannot prevent this hormonal change with childbirth, but you can reduce the severity by preparing emotionally.

Helpful Guidelines:

Identify who your support people will be following delivery - your partner, family, friends.

1. Try to arrange for uninterrupted sleep.
2. Arrange for childcare relief.
3. Arrange for extra help at home with the cooking, cleaning, screening phone calls and infant care. You will need extra, uninterrupted sleep.
4. Arrange to have prepared, nutritious food available for yourself for the first two weeks after delivery, such as frozen meals or volunteer cooks.
5. Accept help from family and friends without feeling guilty.
6. Try not to do too much in one day; focus on one task a day.
7. If you are experiencing emotional adjustment, talk about your feelings with someone close.
8. Be kind to yourself. Do not expect too much of yourself.
9. You will be tired, so during the first three weeks ask people to call before visiting.
10. Avoid other major changes, such as moving, at this time.
11. Plan ways to pamper yourself after childbirth.

Suggestions for Partner or Family Members

The new mother will need her partner or a family member's support and understanding to help her handle her physical and emotional changes. To help, we suggest the following:

- Take time to listen and talk about changes in your family life.
- Take over some of her share of the household responsibilities.
- Be involved with childcare.
- Arrange for her to have regular time for herself.
- Plan for regular time alone together as a couple.

The following check list will help your family physician or midwife understand how you are feeling and assist you in getting help if needed. Please fill it out and take it to your second visit with your family physician or midwife, which will likely be within two weeks after your baby's birth.

Questionnaire

	Yes	No
I feel sad and cry often	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have trouble sleeping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My appetite has changed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not enjoying my baby	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have fears of hurting my baby	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My heart beats faster than usual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get tired for no reason	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My mind is not as clear as it used to be	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find it harder to do the things I used to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am afraid that I am not a good mother	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel hopeless about the future and plans for my baby	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am more sensitive and/or irritable than usual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find it hard to make decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have had thoughts about hurting myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do not enjoy the things I used to enjoy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Adapted by Grand River Hospital from the Hamilton Depression Scale.

Post-partum Exercises

Post-partum exercises are important to strengthen and get your muscles back into shape. Regular toning on a daily basis as well as Kegel exercises may be started the day after delivery. Start slowly and only do the exercises that do not cause discomfort. We encourage new mothers to walk. Strenuous exercise and heavy lifting should be avoided for six weeks. Exercises should be done daily. Each exercise should be done five times each, working up to 10 times each. Continue with the exercise program at least until your six-week check up. All exercises should be done slowly, lying on the floor or a firm surface.

1. Deep Breathing Exercises

Inhale through the nose exhale through the mouth. Attempt to hold a breath for two seconds. This maintains good ventilation to the lungs.

2. Abdominal Tightening and Pelvic Tilts

With your hand in the small of your back, tilt your pelvis by pulling in your stomach muscles and tightening your buttocks as you press the curve in your lower back into your hand. Hold for 5-10 seconds and slowly release. This exercise strengthens the abdominal muscles and improves posture.

3. Lower Back Exercise

Pull one knee up to your chest and hold for 20 seconds (keep other leg bent with the foot on the floor). Do not lift two knees. Repeat five times on one leg before alternating legs. This exercise helps to stretch and relax the lower back.

4. Modified Sit-ups (Curl-ups)

a) Place your hands on your thighs, tuck in your chin and curl up until the shoulder blades lift off the floor, exhaling as you reach to slide your hands towards your knees. Hold for five seconds inhaling as you slowly uncurl. Full sit-ups are not recommended. Do not start with your legs straight or hold down your feet. This places strain on the lower back. This exercise will increase the strength of straight abdominal muscles.

b) Clasp your hands in front of you, tuck in your chin and curl up while reaching both hands to touch the outside of one knee. Slowly uncurl. Repeat with reaching to the other knee. This exercise will strengthen deeper layers of oblique abdominal muscles.

5. Kegal Exercises (For pelvic floor muscles and bladder)

Kegal Exercises should be done at least 2 to 3 times a day, and gradually increased. Squeeze pelvic floor muscles, as if "pulling in" and hold, counting to ten. (The sensation is like pulling everything "up inside", not "pushing down") Rest for ten seconds then repeat. To check if you are tightening the right muscles properly, try doing this when emptying your bladder. The effect of tightening will stop the flow of urine.

Resuming Intercourse/Family Planning

Many parents find that adjusting to their new roles as parents also changes their sexual relationship. It is important that communication between you and your partner includes discussion on how parenting is affecting your life, your response to each other and your feelings and needs.

Ideally, you should wait at least six weeks before resuming sexual activity, which allows you to have your first follow-up appointment with your doctor. Remember, of course, that there are other ways to express your love and enjoy the closeness with your partner without intercourse. Caressing, hugging, kissing, and cuddling are always rewarding.

Post-partum physical changes for the mother may include vaginal dryness, longer arousal time and slackness of pelvic muscles. Use of a lubricating jelly, and experimenting with different positions may help lessen any discomfort.

For pregnancy prevention, you shouldn't rely on the fact that you haven't gotten your period. You can get pregnant the first time that you ovulate, which is before your period occurs. Remember that breastfeeding is NOT a reliable method of birth control.

You should use a form of birth control to ensure you do not get pregnant so soon after a new baby. Foam and condoms used together is one effective way to prevent another pregnancy.

Consult with your doctor before resuming the pill while breastfeeding. A regular birth control pill should not be used, however, there is a "mini-pill" (progesterone only) which can be taken safely - consult with your doctor for more details.

To discuss ongoing needs for birth control talk to your doctor or call the sexual health program at the Community Health Department, (519) 883-2267.

Recovering from a Caesarean section

Your recovery will take a little longer if you have a caesarean birth. You may need assistance for several days with your own care and with looking after your baby. Please ask for help from your nurse if you need it.

After a caesarean, you will have an intravenous for the first 24 hours or until you are drinking well. Your first meal will be full fluids and then you can eat a regular diet.

The incision may have metal staple-like clips. Your nurse will remove metal clips or staples before you go home.

Your nurse will check your incision daily. After the first bandage is removed, the incision will be open to the air to help it heal.

Tell your nurse or doctor if you notice any of the following signs of infection:

- Increased redness, tenderness or swelling around the incision

- Bleeding or oozing from the incision
- An opening of the incision
- Fever or feeling unwell

Your doctor will order medication for pain caused by the incision. Pain medication works better if you take it at regular intervals before you become too uncomfortable. Getting out of bed soon after your operation will help your recovery. Your nurse will help you get up within 12 hours of your operation.

After your operation you may have a tube in your bladder, called a catheter, which will drain your urine. This is usually removed 12 to 24 hours after the surgery.

Supporting your incision with your hands or a pillow will help when you try to get out of bed or when you cough or laugh. You should not lift anything heavier than your baby for the first six weeks. Gas, which collects in your bowels after surgery, may cause some discomfort by the second or third day. To reduce gas pain, walk regularly, do not drink pop, very hot or cold fluids, or ice; do not use straws. Lying on your left side in bed may help.

You may start having daily showers once the large bandage has been removed. Ask your nurse for help with your first shower if you feel a bit weak.

You can breastfeed after a caesarean birth. Breastfeed as soon after birth as you can - your nurse will help you find a comfortable position.

Immunization Against Rubella

- *Why is a rubella vaccine recommended?*

If your blood test indicates that you have no protection against rubella or German measles, we recommend that you receive a rubella vaccination to protect you from the disease. If you are not vaccinated and you get rubella in a future pregnancy, you run a high risk of having a miscarriage, or giving birth to a child with serious birth defects.

- *Are there any risks associated with the vaccine?*

You must not become pregnant for three months after your vaccination. If you become pregnant during this time, the effects on your unborn baby are the same as if you had the disease. A safe and foolproof method of birth control must be practiced at all times for the three months after a rubella vaccination. The birth control pill, intra-uterine device or I.U.D., a condom plus vaginal foam or jelly are examples of reliable birth control methods.

- *Are there any immediate side effects from the vaccine?*

Ninety-nine per cent of people who receive the vaccination feel no symptoms. However, in a few instances, the rubella vaccine has caused some stiffness and pain in the joints, some tenderness, and redness where the shot was given. These symptoms are generally mild and do not last more than three days.

- *What, if any follow-up, is recommended after my vaccination?*

A new series of blood tests need to be done to make sure you are protected against rubella. Contact your family doctor three months after your vaccination to arrange these blood tests.