Personal care after giving birth

Please indicate the topics for which you would like to receive additional information from our care team regarding your personal postnatal care. Please check the desired topics.

- **Postnatal bleeding and menstruation**
  Postnatal bleeding gradually diminishes and changes colour. The bleeding lasts from two to six weeks. If you are not breastfeeding, your period will begin again in four to eight weeks after the birth. For breastfeeding mothers, it may take several months for your period to return, even after you stop breastfeeding. Do not use tampons or vaginal douche. Change your sanitary pad regularly, at least every 4 hours.

- **Pain relief**
  You can take an analgesic (acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen) like the one you received in the hospital to relieve pain. These drugs are safe for breastfeeding mothers. Do not take them if you are allergic to them.

- **Diet**
  After your child is born, a varied, balanced diet is recommended according to Canada's Food Guide. Weight-loss diets are not recommended during the postnatal period or at any time while you are breastfeeding.

- **Uterine cramps**
  Some mothers experience cramping after their child’s birth. Cramping lasts about one week.

- **Personal hygiene**
  You may bathe or shower at any time after a vaginal birth. Bathing is allowed approximately 5 to 7 days after your C-section. Your tub should be clean with no bubble bath or oil.

- **Sleep and rest**
  It is perfectly normal to feel tired after the birth of a child. It may take several weeks before your energy level returns to normal. Regular rest periods are recommended; try to nap while your baby is sleeping.

- **Urinary and bowel function**
  You may experience some difficulty in urinating and having bowel movements for a few days after giving birth. If this situation persists, please discuss it with your doctor or midwife.

- **Hemorrhoids**
  Hemorrhoids often resolve on their own in less than two weeks.

- **Breast care**
  For breastfeeding mothers, refer to My breastfeeding guide from Best start.

  For mothers who are not breastfeeding, discuss caring for your breasts with your nurse, as your body will still produce milk in the days following delivery.

- **C-section wound care and physical activity**
  Your incision must be cleaned with mild, unscented soap, rinsed and thoroughly dried. Remove the adhesive strips after 7 days if they have not peeled off on their own. Resume your physical activities gradually after a C-section. Do not lift more than your baby during the first month. You can start driving your car again once you feel safe.

- **Sex and contraception**
  Couples can begin having sex again whenever they decide the time is right. It is recommended that you discuss with your doctor or midwife the best method of contraception for you.

- **"Baby blues" and post-partum depression**
  There is nothing unusual about feeling sad or overwhelmed by all of the feelings associated with your new role as a mother, or to have crying episodes. These feelings usually disappear without treatment in two weeks. The symptoms of post-partum depression are very similar to other types of depression, but thoughts centre more on the baby, i.e., you may focus too much or too little on your baby. Discuss your feelings with your doctor or midwife if they continue.