

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.

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

Perineum (area between vagina and anus)
The perineum area can remain sensitive for a while after the birth. If you have stitches, they should come out on their own within two weeks. Full healing of the tissue takes from four to six weeks.

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.

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.

Personal hygiene
You may shower or bathe at any time after a vaginal delivery. If, however, you've had a C-section, we recommend that you wait until your incision has completely healed before taking a bath. Your bathtub 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.

Postnatal exercise
You can gradually resume exercising two weeks after a vaginal birth and six weeks after a C-section.

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.