



# NEW BEGINNINGS . . .

a newsletter dedicated to the pregnant family.

No. 7

Early Postpartum

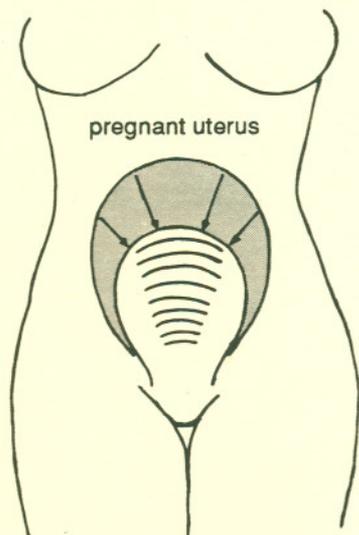
## Physical Changes and Concerns

Congratulations on the birth of your baby! The time of waiting is over. Parenting has begun. Enjoy the present. Keep feeling. Don't worry if the feelings are conflicting. There will be times when you may feel frustrated that the baby is crying again. The next minute you will feel the love only a parent can feel for a child. Enjoy yourself, this is going to be an experience you'll never forget!

### Physical Changes and Concerns

#### Changes in Uterine Size

During pregnancy, your uterus stretched to make room for your baby. Right after the placenta was delivered, the muscles of your uterus contracted. This is your body's way of preventing hemorrhage. It reduces the size of the uterus. As long as the uterus stays contracted, excessive bleeding is prevented. The uterus decreases in size and gradually returns to its non-pregnant size. The total process takes about 6 weeks.



#### Vaginal discharge (Lochia)

At first, your flow was a dark red color. After 3-4 days, the color changes to pink or red-brown. About 10-14 days after delivery, the discharge should become cream-colored. This cream-colored discharge may last up to 4 weeks. **An offensive odor indicates an infection. Report this to your health care provider at once!**

You may see a change in your flow after you return home. Your flow may return to a dark red color even though it was previously pinkish. This may mean too much physical activity. Slow down . . . rest when your baby rests . . . don't overdo. If the flow does not return to a pinkish color within a day, call your health care provider.

#### Breast Self Exam

Every woman should examine her breasts monthly. If you are not familiar with this technique, be sure to discuss it with your health care provider at your next visit. A mother who is breastfeeding should know that she may sometimes find a distended milk gland that will feel like a cyst or tumor. Don't worry about these lumps unless they persist beyond two breastfeedings. It is normal to express milk from the nipple. Mothers who are not breastfeeding can expect their breasts to return to their pre-pregnant state about 6 weeks after delivery.

### Emotional Changes

In the days and weeks after the birth of the baby, the mother needs to talk about her labor and delivery. This need to talk is very important. It provides a time to share feelings.

#### After a Cesarean

Ten to thirty percent of deliveries are cesarean births. Many of these are unplanned. This leaves the parents little time to prepare. Some mothers may have feelings of failure. Fathers may also experience a sense of loss and disappointment. He may have a sense of relief that the birth is over. These feelings are very normal. Don't bottle up your feelings. Talk with each other, family members, and friends.

#### "Baby Blues"

Some women experience a "blue" feeling after childbirth. You may not be able to find a cause. The blues usually appear between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> day after delivery. They may appear at any time. You may have periods of crying, irritability, a feeling of being "not quite with it", or just a "slow" feeling. These feelings may come and go, and may last several days.

Reasons for these feelings include added duties of motherhood, changing hormones, fatigue, and concern for the baby. These feelings are normal. If they persist for several days, or you become deeply depressed, contact your health care provider. **Tell somebody!** The National Hotline for the "Postpartum Support International Postpartum Depression Helpline" call 1-800-4PPD (4773).

## Nutrition and Physical Activity

The diet for the mother who is bottlefeeding should be the same as for any non-pregnant woman. The diet should be well-balanced, including food from all the food groups.

The mother who is breastfeeding has more requirements.

About 500 additional calories are needed daily. This provides for milk production.

Additional fluid intake is also necessary. When you are thirsty . . . **Drink!**

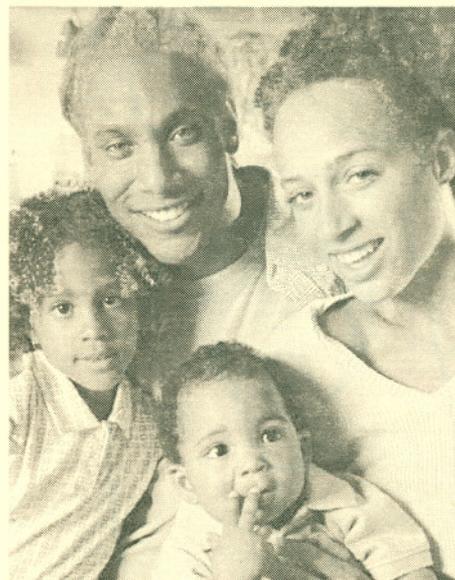
### Amounts of Food Necessary During Pregnancy and Breastfeeding based on MyPyramid

Foods	Active Nonpregnant Woman	Breastfeeding Woman
<b>Protein Foods:</b> 2-3 ounces cooked meat, poultry, fish 1 oz = 1 egg, 1 tablespoon peanut butter, ¼ cup cooked dried beans and peas	5 - 6 ounces/day	5 - 6-1/2 ounces/day
<b>Vegetables:</b> 1 cup = 1 cup 100% vegetable juice 1 cup cooked raw vegetables 2 cups raw leafy vegetables Include one cup dark green vegetables every day	2 - 3 cups/day	2 ½ cups - 3 ½ cups/day
<b>Fruits:</b> 1 cup = 1 regular size whole fruit 1 cup canned fruit, 1 cup 100% juice Include one high Vitamin C fruit per day (citrus, watermelon, strawberries)	1 ½ - 2 cups/day	1 ½ cups - 2 cups/day
<b>Grains:</b> 1 oz = 1 slice bread, ½ bun 1 cup cold cereal, ½ cup cooked cereal ½ cup cooked pasta or rice.	5 - 7 ounces/day	6 - 10 ounces/day
<b>Milk/Dairy:</b> 1 cup = 1 cup milk, 8 oz yogurt, 1 ½ ounces cheese ½ cup cottage cheese = ¼ cup milk	3 cups/day	3 - 4 cups/day

## Family Relationships

Family commitments involve having time and energy for each member of the family. Suggestions to help cope with changes a new baby brings include:

- **Set priorities:** dishes do not have to be done right after a meal . . . the committee you are on can do without you for awhile . . .
- **Don't be overly concerned with appearances:** straighten the house instead of deep cleaning . . . dusting can wait . . . use paper plates . . .
- **Get plenty of rest and sleep:** sleep when the baby sleeps . . . take the phone off the hook . . . let family and friends know you need extra rest . . .
- **Arrange for time away from the baby:** daddy, a friend, grandma, can care for the baby while you take a walk or you and your husband should plan "dates" for just the two of you . . .
- **Be open in your communication with others:** you cannot receive support from others if your need is not shared. Share your frustrations, your delight, and your smiles.
- **Be aware of community health agencies in your area:** If a question arises after "office hours", remember the hospital is open "24 hours a day". The nurses will be happy to help you.
- **Include daddy in the care of the baby:** he can bathe the baby . . . walk the floor with a fussy baby . . . change diapers . . . and much, much more . . .



### Sexuality

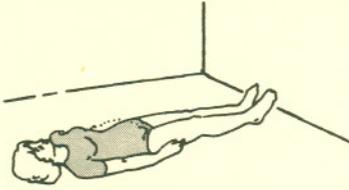
Many couples see a change in their sexual relationship after the birth of their baby. Physical discomfort, fatigue, and tension may be a problem for the woman. The father, seeing his wife in the new role as mother, may feel uneasy viewing her as a sexual partner. He may also fear hurting her during intercourse. The couple may be interrupted by the baby crying. This may add to their frustrations. Each person has different needs and desires. These affect the sexual adjustment of the couple after the baby is born. Talking about these needs and desires is very important.

# Postpartum Exercises

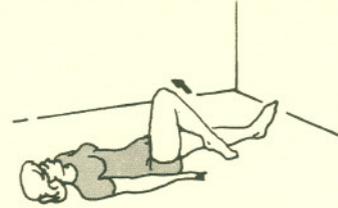
## Postpartum Exercise Program

Many women are disappointed with how their stomach looks after delivery. When you stand up...you still look pregnant! Postpartum exercises can do a lot to tone the muscles that were stretched during pregnancy. Some of these exercises can

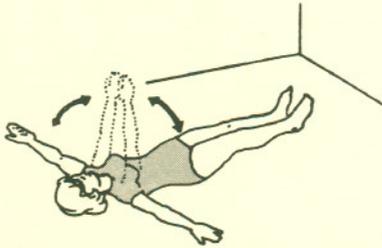
be started the day after delivery. Don't over exercise at first. The chart shows when to add another exercise to your daily routine. Each exercise should be done 4 times in the morning and evening for at least 6 weeks.



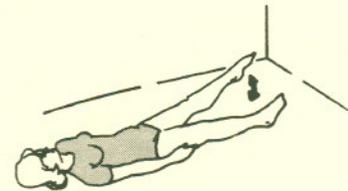
**1<sup>st</sup> Day:** Raise abdomen while inhaling deeply. Slowly exhale through pursed lips. Contract stomach muscles tightly.



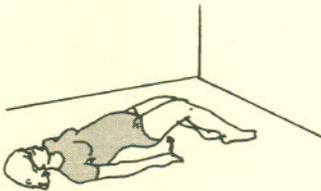
**6<sup>th</sup> Day:** Lie on your back. Slowly bring the knee and thigh toward the stomach. Lower your foot toward your buttock. Straighten and lower your leg.



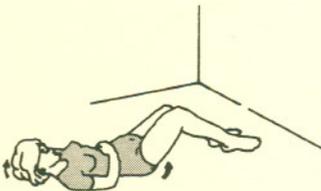
**2<sup>nd</sup> Day:** Lying on your back with your legs slightly parted. Place your arms at right angles to your body. Slowly raise them. Keep elbows stiff. Touch your hands. Lower your arms slowly.



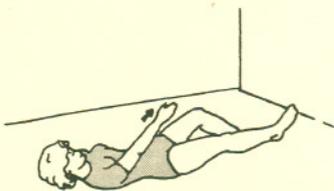
**7<sup>th</sup> Day:** Lie on your back. Point toes. Keep knees straight. Raise one leg and then the other as high as possible.



**3<sup>rd</sup> Day:** Lie with your arms at your sides. Pull your knees up slightly. Arch your back.



**4<sup>th</sup> Day:** Lie with your knees and hips bent. Tilt your pelvis inward. Tighten your buttocks as you lift your head.



**5<sup>th</sup> Day:** Lie with your legs straight. Raise your head and knee slightly. Reach for (but do not touch) your left knee with your right hand. Repeat using your right knee and left hand.

Adapted from: Sherwen, L., Scoloveno, M., Weingarten, C. (1991). *Nursing Care of the Childbearing Family*. Norwalk, Connecticut: Appleton & Lange.

## NEW BEGINNINGS . . .

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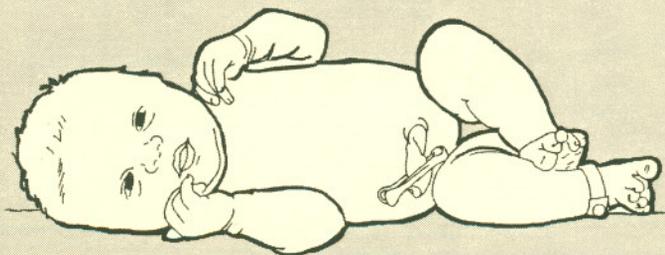
## Return to the Clinic

A return to your health care provider is important. This allows your health care provider to be sure that your body is returning to its non-pregnant state. It also provides a chance for questions to be answered.

The postpartum exam will include: blood pressure, temperature, pulse, respirations and weight. A breast and vaginal exam will also be done. This is a good time to ask questions about breast self exam. Blood and urine samples will also be taken.

## Growth and Development

(The Newborn)



- By 3 days of age – healthy infants can tell their mother's voice and face from another woman.
- Prompt response to a newborn's crying may decrease crying in later months.

- Smiling is seen within the first week.
- The baby becomes quiet and more alert in response to cuddling.
- The baby's clearest vision is between 7"-12" (just the distance between your face and baby when you hold your baby in the crook of your arm).
- At 5 days or less, your baby is attracted by black and white color patterns.
- Your baby can notice color at 2 months of age.
- Your baby prefers patterns to plain surfaces . . . and your face more than anything!
- By 2 minutes of age, he/she can move eyes in the direction of sound.
- Responds to low pitched sounds by relaxing.
- Can tell the difference between sweet and sour tastes by 3 days of age.
- Can imitate parents actions by 2 weeks of age. (If you stick out your tongue at him . . . he'll stick out his tongue at you).

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Health Resources and Services Administration  
Maternal and Child Health Bureau

