



POSTPARTUM CARE

ÁREA 1 MURCIA-OESTE
HOSPITAL CLÍNICO UNIVERSITARIO
VIRGEN DE LA ARRIXACA



This is intended to give you information and useful recommendations for your wellbeing and that of your baby once you leave La Arrixaca after having given birth. If after reading this document you have any doubts or need any clarification, please do not hesitate to ask your midwife or doctor.

This and more information about childbirth at La Arrixaca is available on the website www.murciasalud.es/partonormal



WHAT AM I GOING TO FEEL?

During the next six weeks your body is going to undergo changes to go back to normal after pregnancy. This is what is known as "quarantine" or "puerperium".

- The uterus begins to decrease in size while it expels lochia, a heavy reddish colour flow at the beginning, which changes to pink and then to brownish-white, and that will last for several weeks.
- You may also have afterpains: these are stomach pains, like cramps, which last for several days. They are more painful if you have had more than one child
- Some mothers may feel discomfort in their legs and back. This can be relieved with proper exercises and massage.
- Your period will return approximately 40 days after childbirth. If you breastfeed your baby, it may also be delayed until you stop doing so.
- After childbirth many emotions may arise such as: relief, euphoria, irritability, sadness, joy, crying or guilt. Do not be surprised if you feel stressed. We all go through a situation of stress after giving birth. Now you will realize to what extent your baby depends on you. It may be useful to talk about it with your partner or midwife.



WHAT CAN I DO?

- First of all, do not smoke or drink alcohol. Both of these drugs are bad for you and for your child. Do not take any medication not prescribed by a doctor.
- Follow a varied and balanced diet, rich in iron (legumes, meat, fish, fruit and vegetables) and calcium (milk, yoghurt and fresh cheese).
- To avoid constipation it is advisable to drink plenty of fluids and eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. Do not take oral laxatives while breast-feeding.
- Take a shower every day and wash your hair if you want, but avoid having a bath until the bleeding stops.
- Use cotton sanitary pads.
- At the beginning, avoid straining and intense physical exercise. Then (depending on how you feel), gradually increase your physical activity, until you get back to normal.
- Take a walk every day. You will feel better and it will help improve constipation.
- It is very important you get enough rest and sleep. To do this you must count on the help of your partner or relatives. When your baby sleeps, take advantage to sleep or rest.
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And the wound?

It is possible that during delivery an incision had to be made in your perineum, which is called an episiotomy, to facilitate the birth of your baby. If so, you must keep the wound clean and always dry. That is why it is very important to dry the wound well after your shower. To do so, pat it dry: never rub it with the towel.

You may feel the area tight or itchy, and may feel some pain. If you notice a bad smell, a lot of pain or pus, see your midwife.

Other cares of the wound are:

- Change pad frequently.
- Clean the area after passing stools, and always from front to back.
- Wear comfortable, loose clothing, and cotton underwear.
- Do not use disinfectants, as they hinder correct healing.
- Stitches do not have to be removed. They fall out on their own after about ten days. If you notice that after 15 days they have not, and/or feel they are very tight, see your midwife.

And sexual relations?

There is no set time to resume sexual relations. It is recommendable to wait until the end of the quarantine period, but this will always depend on the couple. If you had an episiotomy, you must have fully recovered. The first few times you may feel some discomfort and note vaginal dryness. Lubricating cream will help you to have a more pleasant relationship.

Pregnancy is possible even if your period has not returned and you are breastfeeding your baby. It is false that a woman who is breastfeeding cannot get pregnant. For your health and the health of your next baby, it is recommendable to leave at least 18 months between one pregnancy and the next.

FEEDING YOUR BABY

Your breasts have been prepared to produce milk. Colostrum is the first stage of breastmilk, and is a yellowish clear liquid (not always visible), which continues to be produced until your milk comes in, between the third and fifth day after delivery.

Breastmilk is by far the best food you can give your baby. It increases the baby's defenses and reinforces the attachment between mother and baby. Your baby will not need anything else during his/her first six months of life. After, it will have to be complemented with other foods until the age of at least two years.

You should breastfeed on demand, i.e. whenever your baby wants, and for as long as he/she wants. Offer the second breast when the first has emptied (or your baby pulls away) and if he/she wants it. The first few days it is possible that your baby may not ask to nurse. If so, offer him/her your breast at least every 4 hours during the day. Take note that:

- It is not necessary to wash your breasts either before or after each feed, just dry them.
- Adopt a comfortable position, for both you and your baby. His/her nose must be at the level of your nipple.
- Keep your nipples dry and hydrated, applying a little milk and letting it dry. Change breast pads frequently to avoid moisture.
- If cracks appear in the nipples and/or pain while breastfeeding, it may be due to incorrect positioning of the baby while feeding. If this happens, check with your midwife.

Breastfeeding is also beneficial for the mother. It decreases bleeding after childbirth and helps with recovery. It also accelerates weight loss. There are breastfeeding support groups that are very helpful.

Care of the umbilical cord.

It falls off during the first two weeks. It will dry more quickly if exposed to air. It is important to keep the umbilical cord stump clean and dry.

Clean it with 70% alcohol. Put a few drops on the stump, directly from the container. You must do this twice a day and whenever necessary.

Remember to continue treating the navel up to 3 or 4 days after the stump falling off.

WHERE MUST I GO FOR MEDICAL ATTENTION?

If you have any of these symptoms, you **MUST** go to the **Hospital Maternal de la ARRIXACA Emergency Department**:

- Fever over 38.5°C.
- Bad-smelling or an increase in lochia.
- Appearance of severe stomach or back (lumbar) pain.
- Burning sensation when urinating, urinating frequently and small quantity.
- Breast pain and redness.
- Swelling or severe pain in a leg.

Although you do not notice anything abnormal, you must make two appointments at your **Health Centre**:

- For the midwife, who must give you a checkup between the fifth and seventh day after delivery.
- For the pediatrician, who will give your baby a checkup before he/she is one month old.