

Caring for Your Bottom After Childbirth

Discharge and Bleeding

You will have discharge and bleeding, called lochia, for about 4 weeks after giving birth, sometimes it lasts longer. Initially the flow will be heavy and a dark red with some clots. This should last about 3-6 days. After this you will notice the flow slowing down and becoming lighter in color. By about the second week, the discharge turns from pink to a brown or yellowish color and the flow is very light. On occasion when you stand up there may be a rush of blood. This may also occur after nursing your baby. Do not be alarmed. This is due to the pooling of blood in your body and the sudden change in position. If you notice bright red bleeding, an increase in abdominal pain or if you have a fever, contact your health care provider immediately. Remember to change your pad frequently to prevent any infection.

Perineal Cleansing

Make sure to follow the instructions you receive from your health care provider. Here are some steps for proper perineal cleansing:

- After using the bathroom, squirt or pour warm water over the entire vaginal area. Your health care provider may have provided you with a squirt bottle for this purpose and may have included some antiseptic soap.
- Gently **pat** the area dry with toilet paper, making sure to start at the front and end at the back to avoid spreading germs from your rectum to your vagina.
- Toilet paper contains wood fibers. If you find it too rough to the area, you may use a cotton washcloth. Try to avoid baby wipes or other wipes as these can be irritating.

- Use a blow dryer on low or cool to dry the area. This prevents yeast infections and may be gentler on the skin.
- After drying the area, you may use an ice pack if necessary.
- Remember to change your pad regularly and use pads that are mostly or 100% cotton. Always® pads have chemicals that are very irritating to the perineum. When possible, avoid this brand.
- Always wash your hands after caring for your perineum.

Pain & Swelling

You may notice some swelling and pain in your bottom due to the stretching required to deliver your baby. To reduce swelling you can use ice packs. Be sure to wrap the ice pack with a washcloth or other soft, absorbent material. Direct application of the ice pack on your skin can damage tender tissue in this area if prolonged. You can also take sitz baths. You might have gone home from the hospital with a special tub made for this. If not, you can sit in a bathtub with 2-3 inches of warm water for about 10 minutes. You may use pain medications, such as Motrin®, to control your pain. Motrin® can also reduce swelling.

Motrin® may be irritating to the stomach, always take it with food.

Hemorrhoids

Everyone has some hemorrhoids either inside of or outside of the body. Hemorrhoids may enlarge after childbirth as a result of pushing. You can use cotton balls, pads soaked in witch hazel or Tucks pads to help soothe burning or itching. Use these after you have thoroughly cleaned the area after a bowel movement. If you are having trouble with constipation, try to make changes in your diet to include more fiber and plenty of water. If diet changes are not working, please consult with your healthcare provider for further recommendations especially if breast feeding.

Tips and Warnings

Michigan Healthy Healing After Delivery program
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- Perform Kegel Exercises often to help strengthen the muscles in the pelvic floor. Five squeezes done two or three times a day is sufficient.
- Be sure that your bath water or sitz bath water is not too hot. This area is tender and water that seems warm to your hand could be very painful to your perineum
- Do not use powders, perfumes, or lotions on your perineum unless directed.
- If you notice prolonged itching or a very foul smell, contact your health care provider immediately
- If you feel the area of your stitches seems to be raw or irritated, contact your health care provider

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