



## CESAREAN DELIVERY AFTERCARE

This instruction sheet gives you information about how to care for yourself after surgery. If you have any problems or questions, call Women's Health Advantage at **260-432-4400** during the hours of 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

### What You Can Expect After Surgery

After the surgery, it's common to have:

- Abdominal/pelvic discomfort and cramping, muscle aching and pain/bruising around your incisions
- Numbness or a tingling/burning sensation on the skin near your incision
- Fatigue
- Poor appetite
- Shoulder pain from any remaining gas that may have been used inside your abdomen during the surgery; this should subside within a few days
- Vaginal bleeding
  - During the first week after delivery, the amount and appearance of bleeding is similar to a menstrual period. Over the next few weeks, it will slowly decrease to a yellow-brown discharge.
  - For most women, the bleeding stops completely by 4 to 6 weeks after delivery
  - Change your pads frequently. Do not use tampons until your provider says you can at your postpartum office visit.
  - Do not douche
  - Watch for changes in flow such as a sudden increase in volume of blood or suddenly passing large clots. If this happens, contact your provider.
  - If you are not breastfeeding, your period could return 6 to 8 weeks

## **Incision Care**

- Your incision was closed with either absorbable sutures or staples under the skin which will dissolve by themselves. Sometimes steri-strips (small pieces of surgical tape) are placed across the incisions. Remove these 1 week after your surgery. If they fall off earlier, that's okay. If you have metal staples in place, you will need to make an appointment at your provider's office to have them removed approximately 3 to 7 days after surgery.
- Occasionally, a certain type of bandage is placed over the incision and is not removed prior to you going home. If you go home with this bandage in place, remove it by the 7th day after surgery, or earlier if instructed by your provider.
- When showering, run warm water over the incision and use a mild soap. Avoid scrubbing the incision.
- Check your incision every day for signs of infection, including redness, swelling or pus/foul smelling drainage.

## **Activity**

- Do not drive or operate dangerous machinery while taking prescription pain medications (narcotics)
- Do not drive for two weeks or while you are taking prescription pain medication, whichever is longer. You may be a passenger in a car as soon as you feel able.
- You may shower as soon as desired and/or when you are feeling able and are steady on your feet
- Do not take baths, use a hot tub or swim for 6 weeks unless approved sooner by your provider
- Avoid strenuous activities and heavy lifting for 6 weeks
- For the first week, take short walks around the house. As your energy begins to return, you can gradually add light activities.
- Do not have sexual intercourse for at least 6 weeks and only after your provider says it's okay. Resuming sexual intercourse sooner than that could lead to complications.
- Do not use tampons, douches or vaginal creams (unless ordered by your provider) for at least 6 weeks

## **Diet**

- You may continue your normal diet
- Drink enough water to keep your urine clear or pale yellow

## Medications

- You may continue taking your usual home medications
- A prescription for a narcotic pain medication might have been sent to your pharmacy. You may use it along with ibuprofen (ie: Motrin or Advil) 600 mg every 6 hours or 800 mg every 8 hours. A prescription for ibuprofen might have been called in as well.
- Narcotic prescriptions frequently have acetaminophen (ie: Tylenol) in them, so do not use Tylenol while taking the narcotic medication unless a physician or pharmacist tells you it's okay to do so
- If you do not have a narcotic prescription, you may also use Tylenol Extra Strength 1000 mg every 6 hours and alternate it with ibuprofen
- Do not take more than 2400 mg of ibuprofen or 4000 mg of Tylenol in a 24 hour period

## Avoid Constipation

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Narcotic pain medication, as well as anesthesia, can be constipating, and it's important for your recovery to not strain while having bowel movements. You will want to have soft bowel movements about the consistency of soft serve ice cream.
- We recommend taking Colace or Miralax daily for the first 2 weeks after delivery, especially if you are taking narcotic pain medication
- If you're feeling constipated or if it's been more than a day since your last bowel movement, you can try increasing high fiber foods in your diet, such as prunes, apples, raisins, pears and apple juice
- If you have not had a bowel movement by the 4th or 5th day after surgery, use a laxative such as Milk of Magnesia (as directed on the bottle). Other options include Senokot-S or Dulcolax.

## What To Watch Out For

- Fever, defined as a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or greater
- Redness, swelling or pus/foul smelling drainage from your incision
- Increasing pain not controlled by your pain medication
- A sudden increase in the amount of your vaginal bleeding or passing large clots
- Foul smelling or green/yellow vaginal discharge
- Chest pain and/or shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting that does not go away
- Persistent pain or bleeding with urination
- Pain, redness and/or swelling in your leg
- Persistent headache not relieved by rest, caffeine or pain medication
- If you have been instructed to take your blood pressure at home, and your blood pressure reaches 160 for the top number or 105 for the bottom number

If you experience any of the above, please call Women's Health Advantage at **260-432-4400** during the hours of 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday. If you're concerned about any of your symptoms or if the office is closed, seek care at an **Emergency Department**.

## NOTES

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