



The following information is provided to help you understand what to expect after your caesarian section (c-section).

You may experience vaginal bleeding for up to 6 weeks after your c-section. This bleeding may increase when standing or moving around and/or while breast or chest feeding. Your bleeding will slowly become less red, then pink, and then will have more of a yellow or white color.

At first, your incision will be raised slightly and pinker than the rest of your skin. It will likely appear somewhat puffy. The area around your incision may feel numb or have a tugging sensation.

- Any pain should decrease after 2 to 3 days, but your incision will remain tender for up to 3 weeks or longer.
- Most women require pain medicine for the first few days and may require up to 2 weeks.
- You may feel tearful, anxious or sad for a few days after having a baby. This is commonly called “baby blues”.
- Avoid intercourse until you have seen your healthcare provider.

You will need to see your health care provider in 4 to 6 weeks, contact the surgeon who performed the procedure to arrange a post-operative check.

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Postpartum Care After Cesarean Delivery

Incision Care

- Wear loose, comfortable clothes and cotton underwear
- Your incision should remain uncovered, unless otherwise directed by your healthcare provider.
- Shower after 48 hours. Keep the incision area clean by washing it with mild soap and water. You don't need to scrub it. Often, just letting the water run over your incision in the shower is enough.
- Do not soak in a bathtub or hot tub, or go swimming, until your healthcare provider tells you it is OK.
- Do not apply any salves and/or lotions unless advised by your healthcare provider.

If strips (Steri-Strips) were used to close your incision:

- Do not try to wash off the strips. It is OK to shower and pat your incision dry with a clean towel.
- The strips should fall off in about a week. If they are still there after 10 days, you can remove them, unless your provider tells you not to.

Pain

Discomfort after a c-section can be controlled with anti-inflammatories such as Ibuprofen, Aleve or Advil. You may be prescribed one of these by your healthcare provider. You should use these regularly with Tylenol, as indicated on the bottle. Using pain medication as directed will help to be more active. It is safe to breastfeed while taking any of the pain medications that are recommended or prescribed. If you are taking narcotics then your baby may be more sleepy. It is important that your baby is waking to feed every 3 hours. If it has been more than 3 hours since your baby last fed and you cannot wake them out of sleep, you should contact your baby's healthcare provider as soon as possible.

- Stop taking medication when you no longer need it.
- Hold a pillow over your incision when you cough or take deep breaths. This will support your belly and reduce your pain.

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Activity

Exercise and moving around will improve healing and may prevent blood clots. You can gradually resume your regular activities.

- Do not lift anything heavier than your baby for the first 6 to 8 weeks.
- Don't drive a car for at least 2 weeks. It is OK to ride in a car, but make sure you wear your seat belt. Don't drive if you are taking narcotic pain medicine or if you feel weak or unsafe driving.

Bowel Care

Constipation may occur due to pain medication use and decreased activity. To help your bowels stay regular:

- Drink more liquids
- Eat more whole grains, fruits and vegetables
- Exercise regularly: a 10-minute walk is a great start
- Take over the counter laxatives like, Milk of Magnesia or Restoralax. *(Do not use an enema unless recommended by your healthcare provider)*

Diet

Eat foods containing proteins to promote healing. Drink fluids to stay well-hydrated to reduce constipation and add 350–400 calories every day to boost milk production if needed. A daily multivitamin and mineral supplement containing vitamin D and folic acid is recommended.

When to call your Healthcare provider?

- Your incision has increased pain and/or is warm, red and hard
- Your incision has drainage and/or is opening
- Vaginal discharge develops a foul odor
- Difficult or painful urination
- Difficulty breathing or an unexplained cough
- Pain and/or swelling in your calf muscles or behind your knee
- Fever greater than 38 C or 100.4 F
- Flu-like symptoms
- Heavy bleeding, soaking a pad every hour
- You are still bleeding after 6 weeks (even if it is light).
- You are passing large blood clots
- If you become very sad, depressed, or withdrawn, are having feelings of harming yourself or your baby, or are having trouble caring for yourself or your baby

If you have any further questions, please ask your health care provider.

Special Instructions:

References

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; Task Force on Hypertension in Pregnancy. Hypertension in pregnancy. Report of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' Task Force on Hypertension in Pregnancy. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2013;122(5):1122–1131. PMID: 24150027 pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24150027/.
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Isley MM Postpartum care and long-term health considerations. In: Landon MB, Galan HL, Jauniaux ERM, et al, eds. *Gabbe's Obstetrics: Normal and Problem Pregnancies*. 8th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2021:chap 24.

Adapted from Mount Sinai (November 2022) "Going home after a C-section."

