

 **ALAMO WOMEN’S HEALTH, PLLC**

# Postpartum Care After Vaginal Delivery

After you deliver your newborn (*postpartum period*), the usual stay in the hospital is 24–72 hours. If there were problems with your labor or delivery, or if you have other medical problems, you might be in the hospital longer.

While you are in the hospital, you will receive help and instructions on how to care for yourself and your newborn during the postpartum period.

While you are in the hospital:

* Be sure to tell your nurses if you have pain or discomfort, as well as where you feel the pain and what makes the pain worse.
* If you had an incision made near your vagina (*episiotomy*) or if you had some tearing during delivery, the nurses may put ice packs on your episiotomy or tear. The ice packs may help to reduce the pain and swelling.
* If you are breastfeeding, you may feel uncomfortable contractions of your uterus for a couple of weeks. This is normal. The contractions help your uterus get back to normal size.
* It is normal to have some bleeding after delivery.
* For the first 1–3 days after delivery, the flow is red and the amount may be similar to a period.
* It is common for the flow to start and stop.
* In the first few days, you may pass some small clots. Let your nurses know if you begin to pass large clots or your flow increases.
* **Do not**flush blood clots down the toilet before having the nurse look at them.
* During the next 3–10 days after delivery, your flow should become more watery and pink or brown-tinged in color.
* Ten to fourteen days after delivery, your flow should be a small amount of yellowish-white discharge.
* The amount of your flow will decrease over the first few weeks after delivery. Your flow may stop in 6–8 weeks. Most women have had their flow stop by 12 weeks after delivery.
* You should change your sanitary pads frequently.
* Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after changing pads, using the toilet, or before holding or feeding your newborn.
* You should feel like you need to empty your bladder within the first 6–8 hours after delivery.
* In case you become weak, lightheaded, or faint, call your nurse before you get out of bed for the first time and before you take a shower for the first time.
* Within the first few days after delivery, your breasts may begin to feel tender and full. This is called engorgement. Breast tenderness usually goes away within 48–72 hours after engorgement occurs. You may also notice milk leaking from your breasts. If you are not breastfeeding,**do not**stimulate your breasts. Breast stimulation can make your breasts produce more milk.
* Spending as much time as possible with your newborn is very important. During this time, you and your newborn can feel close and get to know each other. Having your newborn stay in your room (*rooming in*) will help to strengthen the bond with your newborn.  It will give you time to get to know your newborn and become comfortable caring for your newborn.
* Your hormones change after delivery. Sometimes the hormone changes can temporarily cause you to feel sad or tearful. These feelings should not last more than a few days. If these feelings last longer than that, you should talk to your caregiver.
* If desired, talk to your caregiver about methods of family planning or contraception.
* Talk to your caregiver about immunizations. Your caregiver may want you to have the following immunizations before leaving the hospital:
* Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) or tetanus and diphtheria (Td) immunization. It is very important that you and your family (including grandparents) or others caring for your newborn are up-to-date with the Tdap or Td immunizations. The Tdap or Td immunization can help protect your newborn from getting ill.
* Rubella immunization.
* Varicella (chickenpox) immunization.
* Influenza immunization. You should receive this annual immunization if you did not receive the immunization during your pregnancy.

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