



## Postnatal Physiological Changes(產後生理變化及生活指導-英文版)

### 1. Uterine Contraction

Few days after birth, uterine cramping occurs when the uterus contracts and shrinks and is the process whereby the uterus and other reproductive organs return to their state prior to pregnancy. The height and consistency of the uterine fundus can be assessed by palpating the uterus while lying flat on your back (supine) and placing one hand at the base of the uterus above the symphysis pubis in a cupping manner and pressing in and downward with the other hand at the umbilicus until you feel a hard globular mass.

If the uterus is not firm, light massaging with circular motion results in tightening and helps to expel lochia. If massaging the uterus does not result in firming of the fundus, the physician have to be contacted immediately. Severe uterine atony or retained placental fragments may result in excessive blood loss.

### 2. Lochia

Passage of a bloody vaginal discharge known as lochia occurs after birth lasting for 10 to 14 days indicating that the placental site is healing. The discharge is red and of moderate amount for 1 to 3 days following delivery and is called LOCHIA RUBRA. Between days 4 and 9, the discharge becomes less and changes to a pink or brownish color called LOCHIA SEROSA. The last phase occurs when the vaginal discharge turns white called LOCHIA ALBA and lasts from 10 to 14 days postpartum. A constant trickling of blood or the soaking through of a perineal pad in an hour or less is not normal and should be further evaluated.

### 3. Urination

It is normal to have an increase in the formation and secretion of urine (postpartum diuresis) in the first 48 hours after delivery. The bladder and the ureters may be injured by compression during delivery, resulting in dysuria (difficulty in urination) or urine retention. A full bladder can cause the uterus to shift upwards and not contract effectively. An overdistended bladder can even cause injury to the urinary system. Therefore, you should be encouraged to void within your first hour postpartum.

### 4. Ambulation

- (1) Ambulation speeds recovery from delivery. You are encouraged to get out of the bed soon after childbirth. First time getting out of bed induces dizziness due to postural hypotension (drop in blood pressure due to change in body position), anemia or hypoglycemia. Therefore, you have to sit by the bedside initially and then get out of bed if you don't feel dizzy. It is advised to have somebody to assist you when you do so.
- (2) It is recommended to ambulate 24 hours after caesarean section, which promotes bowel movement, alleviates flatulence and prevents thromboembolism (development of a clot within blood vessels). Wearing a support belt or supporting the incision with both hands can reduce the pain and protect the wound incision.



## 5. Menstruation

Generally, if not breastfeeding, postnatal menstruation will come approximately 6-8 weeks after. During the nursing period, menstruation rarely comes and commences after the breastfeeding period.

## 6. Wound healing

- (1) The postnatal perineal wound will close approximately within 12-24 hours, becomes edematous 24 hours after and sutures does not need to be removed. After cesarean birth, the staples/sutures will be removed after 3-5 days and some cases need not be removed.
- (2) Unusual wound healing signs & symptoms: redness, swelling, warm to touch, increasing pain or presence of odorous discharge.

## 7. Perineal Care

Remove your perineal pad from your rear to prevent infection of bacteria from the anal area. Rinse your perineal area with warm water after every void and/or bowel movement and dry the area with tissue paper wiping from the front to the rear.

## 8. Rest & Sleep

During childbirth, the parturient woman exhausts all her energy and loses some blood. After birth, medications will also render an exhausted feeling. Therefore, postnatally, she needs to have sufficient sleep and rest to eliminate such feeling and to encourage milk secretion and wound healing.

## 9. Perspiration

During the pregnant period, the body stores massive amount of moisture. Several days postnatally, the body perspires massively and there is no need to pay special attention to this. Just wipe yourself dry and change your clothing to avoid catching cold or affect your personal hygiene.

## 10. After-birth pains

After-birth pains and pain during delivery is the same because of intermittent womb contractions and will continue for 2-3 days.

## 11. Body Weight Changes

The postnatal body weight will be reduced by about 9 – 10 kilograms. The body weight drops to about 5-6 kilograms immediately after delivery of the baby, placenta, amniotic fluid and blood loss incurred during delivery. One week postnatally, perspiration and urination will become very obvious, and edema will gradually subside. The degree of body weight drop will depend on the severity of edema during the prenatal period. The greater the edema, the greater the drop in body weight. Reduction in size of the womb to its prepregnancy size plus passage of lochia will further reduce the body weight by 1 kilogram.

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