

**Postnatal Care in the Community**

 **Postnatal Care**

A community midwife will visit you the day after you have returned home from hospital between 9am and 5pm, to check you and your baby, and will discuss where and when you would like to be seen again.

Visits for feeding support and weighing your baby may be undertaken by a Maternity Support Worker (MSW), who has been specifically trained to perform these tasks. The midwife will discuss this with you before the visit.

If you and your baby are well, you would normally expect to have 3 postnatal consultations, although more visits will be undertaken if necessary.

After the last visit the midwife will pass your care and that of your baby to your GP and Health Visitor.

While you are still under the care of your midwife, the health visitor will contact you to arrange an appointment to see you, which will take place between 10 - 21 days postnatally.

**Infection**

Good hand hygiene is essential to minimise the risk of infection. Your hands should be thoroughly washed before and afterchanging sanitary towels, bathing stitches, drying your Caesarean wound, going to the toilet and changing nappies.

If you, your family or anyone you have close contact with, has a sore throat or respiratory infection then this is even more important to reduce the risk of transmitting any infection to other parts of your body.

**Perineal care**

During a vaginal birth you may have some small grazes or lacerations to your perineal area and it is important you keep the area clean and dry to allow healing. You may have required stitches if you had a tear or episiotomy (cut), these may be internal, external, or a mixture of both. The midwife will advise you how to keep this area as clean and dry as possible. Regular showers and/or baths with plain water are recommended, you must ensure the area is thoroughly dried afterwards and should also be washed after each visit to the toilet.

The material used for your stitches is dissolvable. After 7 - 10 days you may notice some of the stitch material coming away, this happens as the skin and muscle begin to heal, this is normal.

Sanitary pads should be changed regularly to help prevent infection.

Your community midwife will regularly check on you once you have gone home and will ask to check your stitches.

 **Caesarean section wounds**

There are 3 different ways your Caesarean wound would have been closed. Dissolvable stitches may have been used, in which case there is nothing to be removed. The wound should be kept clean and dry. Regular showers and/or baths with plain water are recommended, you must ensure the area is thoroughly dried afterwards.

Alternatively, wound staples or a bead stitch may have been used. These are normally removed at day 5 (or occasionally day 7). You will be informed which have been used when you leave hospital. Your community midwife will remove them when she visits. If you notice any redness, swelling or leakage from the wound site please inform your midwife or GP.

**Blood loss**

Blood loss differs for each woman but generally is like a period for the first 3 - 4 days, with you needing to change your sanitary pad every few hours. You may find that when you first get up in the morning, or if you have just breastfed, that your blood loss increases slightly - this is normal.

Your loss will start to settle after 3 - 4 days, and changes from red to brown/pink. It gradually becomes a discharge and generally lasts for between 3 and 4 weeks. There may be times when your loss settles then increases slightly, this is normal, but it should not be as heavy as it was in the first few days after you had your baby. Tampons should not be used for 6 weeks after having a baby.

**Pain relief**

Some pain can be expected if you have had stitches or a Caesarean. You may have been given painkillers when you were discharged from hospital or you may take over the counter medication. It is important to check that you are not allergic to any medication you take and to remember that some tablets should not be taken if you are breastfeeding eg. Codeine. Do not exceed the maximum recommended dose of any medication you are taking. If you are uncertain, your community midwife, GP or pharmacist will be able to advise you.

**If you have any of the following signs/symptoms you will need to contact a GP urgently:**

* Abdominal pain, severe enough to need regular painkillers or which does not respond to the usual painkillers that you take
* Chest pain/shortness of breath
* Diarrhoea and vomiting
* Discharge from your stitches/wound, especially if it smells
* Feeling generally unwell/having flu-like symptoms
* Having a sore throat, particularly if anyone in the family (especially children) has recently had a sore throat or a respiratory infection
* Heavy bleeding, particularly when your loss had begun to settle
* Offensive vaginal loss
* Passing blood clots (over the size of a 50 pence piece)
* Raised temperature (over 37.5 degrees)
* Red lump in breast(s), breast pain with flu like symptoms

**Emotional Wellbeing**

During the first week after childbirth, many women get what's often called the ‘baby blues’. This is probably due to the sudden hormonal and chemical changes that take place in your body. Symptoms can include:

* bursting into tears for no apparent reason
* feeling depressed or anxious
* feeling emotional and irrational
* feeling irritable or touchy

All these symptoms are normal and usually mild, they only last a few days and don't stop you leading a normal life. If you still feel anxious or depressed over a longer period of time, please speak to your midwife, health visitor or GP.

**If your baby has any of the following signs/symptoms you will need to contact a GP urgently:**

* Grunts with each breath and breathing faster than normal
* Has a bulging fontanelle (soft spot at the top of baby’s head)
* Has blood in stools
* High fever or sweating
* High pitched or week cry
* Is dehydrated
* Much less responsive of floppy
* Not interested in feeding
* Pale all over
* Passes much less urine

**If your baby has any of the following signs/symptoms urgent medical attention should be sought by dialling 999:**

* Cannot be woken
* Has a fit
* Has a rash that does not disappear under pressure
* Has glazed eyes and does not focus on anything
* Is unresponsive and shows no awareness of what is going on
* Stops breathing or goes blue
* Vomits green fluid

**To Contact a Midwife:**

**In Hours (9am – 5pm):**The Hub:01302 553245
Triage: 01302 647071

**Out of Hours:**Delivery Suite: 01302 553165
Labour Ward: 01909 502235