

Postnatal care and support

Maternal physical wellbeing and health concerns

An easy read guide

This booklet is about postnatal care: Maternal physical wellbeing and health concerns

There are 7 booklets in total

Booklet 1: Postnatal care, birth registration and coronavirus

Booklet 2: Resuming sexual intercourse and contraception

Booklet 3: Maternal physical wellbeing and health concerns

Booklet 4: Emotional wellbeing and mental health

Booklet 5: Infant feeding and blood spot tests

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Physical health and wellbeing

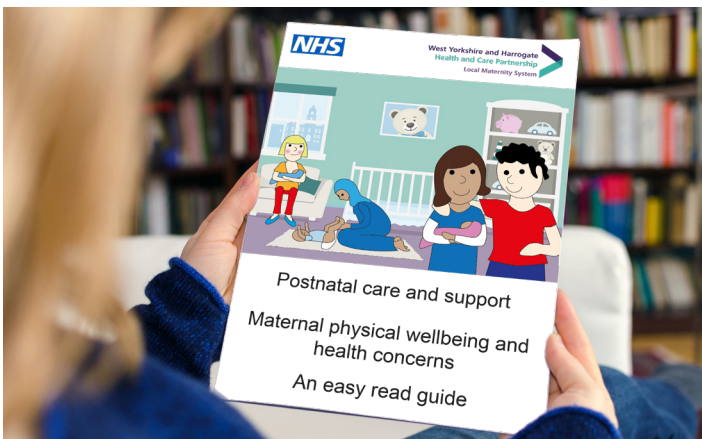


Being pregnant and giving birth can cause your body to change in many ways.

It may take weeks or even months for your body to feel like it did before you were pregnant.



Your midwife will ask about your wellbeing each time you speak or see them. Your wellbeing is how you feel generally in yourself.



In this booklet there are some common things that you might feel after giving birth.

There is also some advice on self-care and when you should contact your midwife or GP.



There is some information about more serious health concerns and advice on when you should contact your maternity unit or ring 999.

Care of stitches and perineum (the area between your anus and vagina)



What you might feel like

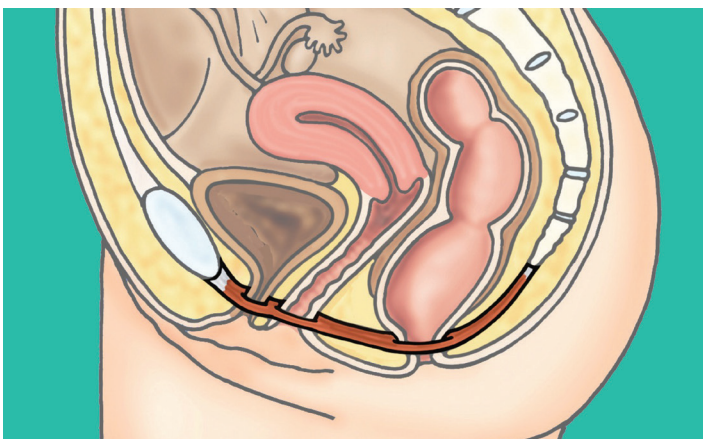
You might feel uncomfortable and feel a stinging pain in the first few days after giving birth, even if you have not had stitches.



What you can do

Wash your hands before and after going to the toilet. Make sure you change your sanitary pads regularly. Have a bath or shower every day to keep the area clean.

Use cold treatments like crushed ice in a clean cloth or gel pads on your perineum. Use painkillers like paracetamol.



When you should get help from your GP or midwife

If the pain gets worse or you start to feel more uncomfortable.

If there is any sign of infection, this could be a bad smell.

If you have pain when you are having sex.

Headache



You might get headaches for lots of different reasons. It might be that you are tired or stressed.



What you can do

Try to rest and relax. Use painkillers like paracetamol.



When you should get help from your GP or midwife

If your headache gets worse when you are standing or sitting.

Any other signs of pre-eclampsia. There is more information further on in this booklet.

Backache



This could be because of your hormones. It might also be poor posture or how you were laid during the birth of your baby.



What you can do

Make sure you have good posture.

Try to stand and sit up straight

Don't hunch over

Support your back.

Be careful of how you lift things.



When you should get help from your GP or midwife

If the pain gets worse and it doesn't get any better after you have taken tablets.

Constipation



This is when you can't go for a poo. It may be a few days before you can go to the toilet properly.

Some tablets and medicines might make you feel constipated or make your poo loose.



What you can do

Go to the toilet when you need to. Don't avoid going as this can make you feel worse.

Drink plenty of fluids like water.



Eat fruit, vegetables and fibre like cereal.

Gentle laxatives may help. These are tablets or medicine that will help you go to the toilet. You should speak to your midwife first though.



When you should get help from your GP or midwife

If you have not been for a poo for longer than 3 days.

If you have no control over your bowels.

Piles



These are also called haemorrhoids. They are lumps inside and around your bottom. They might feel painful or itchy.

You might sometimes notice a small amount of fresh blood especially if you are straining when you go for a poo.



What you can do

Drink lots of fluid like water.

Eat lots of fibre to keep your poo soft. This is things like bran.

Take paracetamol if your piles hurt

Have a warm bath to help with itching and pain.



Use an ice pack wrapped in a towel if you feel uncomfortable.

Ask your pharmacist about any creams that might help.

When you should get help from your GP or midwife

If you have very bad pain or your piles are swollen or prolapsed (This is when you feel the piles are outside your bottom.)

If you have bad bleeding from your bottom.



After a caesarean



When you have had a caesarean section the outside edges of your wound should start to heal after about 2 days. The inside healing of your muscle and other tissue might take many months.



It is normal to feel a bit uncomfortable for a while but it should get slowly get better.

Small areas of numbness may last for a few months.



What you can do

Take paracetamol for the pain if you need to.

Follow the instructions you have been given about your dressing. This is the plasters and bandages that cover your wound.



Always wash your hands before touching your wound.

Keep the wound clean. It's better to have a shower than a bath.



Do not rub soap, shower gel, or talc on your wound.

Pat the wound dry with a clean towel after your shower.

Wear loose fitting clothes so they don't rub on your wound.



When you should get help from your GP or midwife

You have more pain in your wound or it is getting worse.



If it doesn't feel any better after taking painkillers.

If the wound is red, swollen or hot.



If there is green or yellow weeping discharge coming from it or you have a bad smelling discharge from your vagina.

If you feel like you have a fever or a high temperature.

Fatigue



Fatigue is when you feel very tired. It is normal to feel more tired than usual after having a baby as your body is recovering.

What you can do

Eat a good balanced diet.

Take some gentle exercise like a short walk.

Take some time to relax.

Ask your friends, relatives and partner to help.



When you should get help from your GP or midwife

If you are on tablets for anaemia and have other symptoms like feeling dizzy and headaches.



If you are feeling low in your mood and you have trouble sleeping.

Passing urine (going for a wee)



You might be afraid to go for a wee after giving birth especially if you have had stitches.

It is important that you do not stop yourself from going.

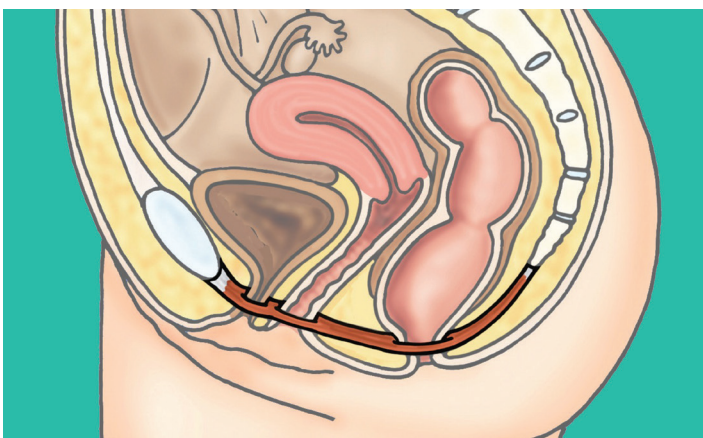


What you can do

Try going for a wee in the bath or shower.



Drink plenty of water.



Start your pelvic floor exercises. There is more information about these later on in this booklet.

More serious health concerns for mums that have just had babies



After having a baby there are some signs and symptoms that might be because of something serious.

If you get any of the symptoms below you must get help from your midwife, your maternity unit or in an emergency call 999.



Symptom – abnormal bleeding. This might be sudden heavy blood loss and signs of shock like feeling faint, dizzy, having a very fast heartbeat.

This could be a haemorrhage.



Symptom – feeling generally unwell. You have a fever, you are shivering, have bad tummy pain or bad smells from your wound or vagina.

This could be sepsis.



Symptom – headache. You have a headache with changes in your vision, you feel sick and are being sick. You feel like you have heartburn and you are finding it hard to look into the light.

This could be pre-eclampsia/ eclampsia/pregnancy induced hypertension.



Symptom – leg pain. You have pain, swelling or redness in your calf muscle.

This could be a blood clot. (deep vein thrombosis)



Symptom – breathing problems. You are having trouble breathing, feel short of breath or have chest pain.

This could be a blood clot. (Pulmonary embolism)



Symptom – breast redness. Your breasts feel tender and have a red area on them. You have a high temperature.

This could be mastitis.



Symptom – low iron levels. You feel dizzy, tired and have tingling feeling in your fingers and toes.

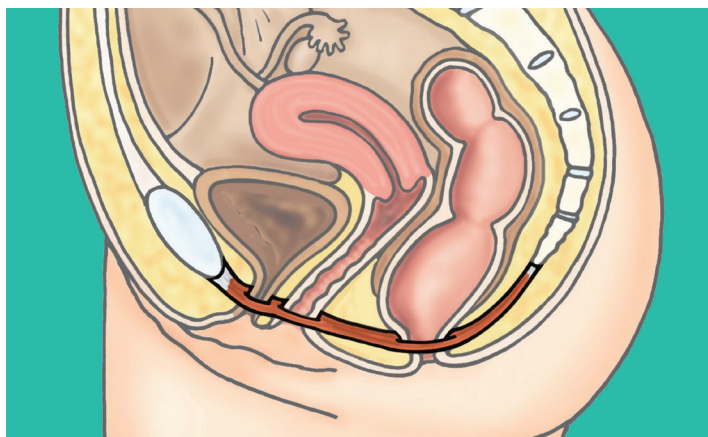
This could be anaemia or low iron.



Symptom – you have fever, heavy bleeding and smelly discharge.

This could be retained products of conception. This is when tissue has stayed in your body after you have given birth.

Pelvic floor muscle exercises



Your pelvic floor is at the bottom of your pelvis. It is layers of muscle which is attached at the front to your pubic bone and at the back to your spine. It looks a bit like a hammock.



The pelvic floor muscles do lots of things such as supporting organs like your bladder, uterus and bowel and stopping you from going to the toilet when you don't want to.

This is called incontinence.



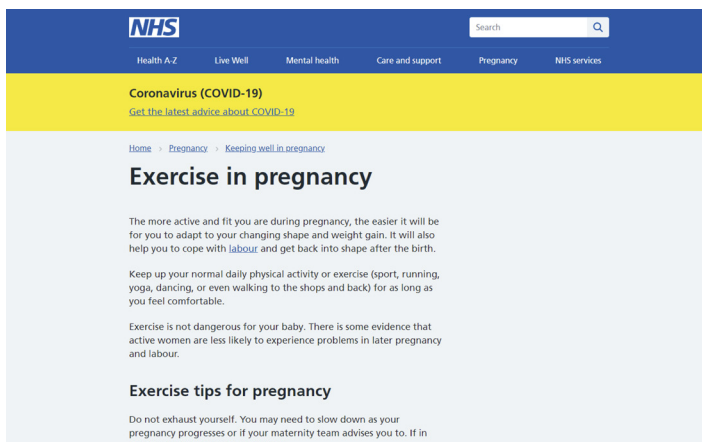
There are lots of things that can make your pelvic floor muscles weak. Being pregnant and giving birth is one of them.



The weakness can then make you leak or go for a wee before you get to the toilet.



Your pelvic floor muscles should be kept strong and active like other muscles in your body. There are exercises that you can do to make them stronger.



You can find more information about pelvic floor exercises in our guide or ask your midwife to show you.

<https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/womens-health/what-are-pelvic-floor-exercises/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/exercise/>



Adult improving access to psychological therapies programme - emotional and mental health support

Wakefield: Turning Point

Tel: 01924 234 860

Email: wakefield.talking@turning-point.co.uk

gateway.mayden.co.uk/referral-v2/ec23d2e0-ba2d-4e0f-af63-d0a151c585dc

Leeds: Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service

Tel: 0113 843 4388

Email: leeds.mws@nhs.net

www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services-a-z/leeds-mental-wellbeing-service/home/

Bradford and Airedale: Relate

Tel: 01274 726 096

Email: information@relatebradford.com

www.relate.org.uk/find-my-nearest-relate/centre/bradford-relate-centre

Calderdale: IAPT

Telephone: 01484 343700

Email: iapt.admin@swyt.nhs.uk

www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/services/improving-access-to-psychological-therapies-iapt/

Kirklees

Tel: 01484 343700

Email: IAPT.Admin@swyt.nhs.uk

kirkleesiapt.co.uk/

Harrogate: IAPT

Tel: 01423 852137/852062

northyorkshireiapt.co.uk/

Department	Airedale	Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Women's and New-born unit	Calderdale & Huddersfield
Triage	01535 292120	01274 364532/364531	MAC 24 hours a day 01422 224419 Huddersfield Community Maternity Advice Line 01484 355743 open 8.30am-4.30pm Monday-Friday
Postnatal Ward	01535 292211	Postnatal ward M4 01274 364539/364540	01422 224249
Community Office	01535 292211/2	Postnatal, Antenatal & Induction Suite M3 01274 364536/364537	01484 355754
Debrief Clinics/	01535 292409	Via midwife, health visitor or GP	Maternity Reception (appointments) 01422 224125 Women's Health Reception (appointments) 01484 342666
Feeding Support	01535 292383	01274 364583	01422 224925
Local Contraception/ Sexual Health	01535 607333	0303 3309500	0303 330 9981

Harrogate	Mid Yorks	Leeds
01423 557548/557531	01924 543002	SJUH 0113 206 5781 LGI 0113 392 6731
01423 553157	01924 541693	SJUH 0113 206 9105 LGI 0113 392 7436
01423 553051	Wakefield: 01924 543424 Pontefract: 01977 747430/31 Dewsbury: 01924 319152	0113 206 3329
Please speak to a member from the midwifery team of the midwifery team regarding a referral	01924 541118/541114	SJUH leadsth-tr.birthmatters@nhs.net LGI leadsth-tr.birthmattsteam@nhs.net
01423 553157 or 01423 553051	Families and babies: 01924 851901 Auntie Pams: 01924 438316 add Midwife: 07824417802	0113 206 4360
01904 721111 www.yorsexualhealth.org.uk/clinics/heatherdene-centre-for-sexual-health/#	Kirklees: 0303 0303 9981 Wakefield: 01924 327586	Leeds Sexual Health 0113 392 0333