

Common Discomforts After Delivery



Some discomforts are common after a vaginal or Cesarean delivery. Your doctors and nurses will show you how to help relieve these discomforts. Some discomforts may continue after you leave the hospital. This handout describes some common discomforts after delivery and ways you can help yourself.

Common Discomfort	What It Is	How To Help Yourself
Shaking / chills	Soon after delivery, you may have shaking and chills. Your nurse will check your temperature. If you do not have a fever, the shaking and chills will go away within an hour.	Ask your nurse for extra warm blankets and hot liquids.
Afterbirth pains	After the placenta delivers, the uterus (womb) tightens firmly to the size of a grapefruit. Over the next 4-6 weeks, the uterus will continue to shrink to its nonpregnant size. This is called involution. As the uterus tightens, you may feel cramping in your lower stomach or back. This discomfort is known as afterbirth pains and may last for several days after delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your pain medicine as prescribed. • Take frequent warm showers • Lie on your stomach, tucking a pillow under your stomach. This puts pressure on your lower stomach. Cesarean mothers also can lie on their stomach. You will not harm your incision. • Put a warm pack to your lower stomach or lower back • Frequently empty your bladder. A full bladder puts pressure on the uterus causing it to cramp.
Perineal discomfort	Some discomfort is normal after a vaginal delivery. The perineum is the area around the birth canal or vagina. This discomfort is from stretching, bruising, and swelling of the muscles during delivery. You may have stitches from the repair of an episiotomy or tear. The stitches may pull, sting, or hurt. Pain medicine may ease the discomfort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your pain medicine as prescribed • Put an ice pack to the area. Ice helps reduce discomfort and swelling. • Use your medicated sprays and witch hazel pads. • Take a sitz bath 2 - 3 times a day. Ask for a portable sitz bath to take home. • Use an inflatable ring or soft cushion for sitting. Ask for an inflatable ring to take home. • Your nurse will show how to use these items.

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Abdominal pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have a Cesarean delivery, abdominal pain is normal. The pain is usually from your incision. Your incision may pull, sting, and hurt. It is usually the most tender the first few days. • Another source of abdominal discomfort after a Cesarean delivery is gas pain. Usually this discomfort happens 1-2 days after delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your pain medicine as prescribed. Your nurse will give you information about the type of pain medicines ordered by your doctor. • Move around in bed. Change positions frequently. • Take frequent walks of 5-10 minutes. • Avoid carbonated drinks, like pop, and very cold drinks, or eating foods that cause gas for you. Do not drink through a straw. • If gas pains become a problem for you, your nurse can show ways to help relieve the discomfort.
Sweating	Another way your body gets rid of the excess fluid is by sweating or perspiration.	Take showers and change clothing frequently.
Fatigue (Tiredness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes of fatigue are physical changes, hormone changes, emotional adjustments, and lack of sleep. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get plenty of rest. • Accept offers of help • Eat a well-balanced diet. Avoid foods high in sugar. • Limit telephone calls and visitors if you need more rest.
Difficulty passing urine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may have difficulty passing urine after delivery. Some vaginal birth mothers may have swelling around the birth canal and opening of the bladder. This can cause passing urine to be difficult at first. Some Cesarean birth mothers may have difficulty urinating after the catheter (plastic tube in the bladder to drain the urine) is removed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink 8 - 10 glasses of water daily. • Try these suggestions to help relax the opening of the bladder while you are urinating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Deep breath slowly. ▶ Run tap water. The sound of tickling water may help relax the opening of the

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	<p>You may have cramps if your bladder gets too full.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few days after delivery, you may notice that you are passing urine in large amounts. Your kidneys help rid your body of the extra fluid retained during pregnancy. 	<p>bladder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pour warm water over your perineum. • Be alert to the signs of infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pain and burning on urination ▶ Passing urine in small amounts ▶ Chills ▶ Fever ▶ Pain in the kidney area <p>These are all signs of infection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call your doctor or nurse right away if you have these symptoms.
Vaginal dryness	<p>The hormone, estrogen, is necessary for your body to lubricate the vagina for sex. After delivery, the level of estrogen is low and having sex may be uncomfortable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of a water-based lubricant like K-Y®, will help ease discomfort during intercourse. You can purchase K-Y ® jelly from your local drug store. • Astroglide ® jelly may be more comfortable. This jelly is thicker than K-Y ® and can be purchased from your local drug store.
Constipation	<p>The loss of abdominal muscle tone, hemorrhoids, surgery, and stitches may cause constipation. It is normal not to have a bowel movement (BM) the first 2 - 3 days after delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat a diet high in fiber - whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. • Drink 8 - 10 glasses of fluids daily. • Take your stool softener if instructed by your doctor. • If you do not have a BM within 7 days of delivery, let your health care provider know.

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Sore breasts	In 3-5 days after delivery, your breasts will swell and fill with milk. This swelling is called engorgement and may be uncomfortable. Your breasts also may leak at times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a supportive bra. • Place an ice pack under each armpit to help decrease swelling and pain. • Take your pain medicine as prescribed. • Avoid running hot water over your breasts. • Avoid frequent touching or handling of your breasts. • The engorgement usually goes away in a few days. There are no safe medicines to "dry up" the breasts.
Hemorrhoids	Hemorrhoids are dilated veins in the rectum. They are caused from the extra weight of the pregnancy and delivery. You may have more tenderness around the rectum from hemorrhoids that may cause problems sitting. Hemorrhoids usually shrink in 6 weeks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place an ice pack to this area to help decrease swelling. • Use your medicated spray witch hazel pads. • Take warm or hot sitz baths 2 - 3 times a day. • Sit on a soft cushion or rubber ring. • Follow the suggestions under constipation to keep your BM's soft. This will help decrease the discomfort when moving your bowels.

If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

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