



# Postnatal Care for Women and their Families following Discharge

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During this period, you may have some concerns about your health or that of your baby. It is important that you speak to a member of your healthcare team (such as your consultant, obstetrician, midwife, doctor, physiotherapist or lactation counsellor) if you have any concerns or questions.

You and your family are encouraged to ask for help whenever you need it. Within this leaflet there is a list of problems you or your baby may have, with advice on how to deal with them.

### **Care and Communication**

You have the right to be fully informed and to make decisions in partnership with your healthcare team. To help with this, your healthcare team should give you information that you can understand and is relevant to your circumstances.

This information and any discussions you have with your healthcare team, must include explanations about the care you receive. You can ask any question you want and can always change your mind. Your own preference is important, and your healthcare team will support your choice of care to the extent possible.

### **First 24 hours After Birth**

Following birth, if all is well with you and your baby, the two of you will stay together at all times. You should discuss with your healthcare professional about how long you want to stay in hospital. After a normal, uncomplicated birth, you have the choice to return home quickly, if all remains well.

### **Postnatal Care**

In the first 24 hours after giving birth, a midwife or doctor will work with you to arrange your postnatal care. This will be recorded in your postnatal notes, which will be filled in during every contact you have with a member of your healthcare team.

### **Your Baby's Health and Feeding**

Most babies are born healthy and stay healthy in the postnatal period. A small number of babies have health issues. Babies who develop jaundice (a condition that causes yellowish colouring of the eyes and skin) in the first 24

hours should be checked immediately. Babies who haven't passed the thick, greenish-brown meconium (the first stool of newborn babies) in the first 24 hours should also be checked immediately.

The information within this leaflet will help you to identify if your baby is unwell and when you need to contact a health professional.

### **If your baby is breastfeeding**

You will be encouraged to breastfeed your baby as often and for as long as he or she wants. This will help your body produce plenty of milk. Your baby will stop feeding when he or she is satisfied. This may be after feeding on one breast or both. You should allow your baby to spontaneously release the first breast and then, after a short wind, offer the second side. There is no need to give your baby anything else to drink.

It is normal to have transient breast fullness as your milk supply increases, and frequent feeding will help to prevent them becoming engorged.

Your healthcare professional will review your breastfeeding experience each time they talk to you. If you or your healthcare professional have any concerns, these will be discussed.

### **Signs that your baby is getting enough milk**

You can hear your baby swallowing, there is a rhythmic sucking and occasional pauses, the baby's hands and arms are relaxed, he or she has a moist mouth and there are several wet nappies each day.

After about the 4th day, your baby should have at least one soiled nappy a day, with loose and yellow poo. Your baby should be satisfied after a feed but waking and wanting to feed again within 2-3 hours.

If you think that your baby is not getting enough milk you may be advised to increase your milk supply by feeding more often, or for longer duration, or giving expressed breast milk via a spoon or syringe.

You can enable your baby to take a more satisfying feed by changing how you position him or her at the breast, and how he or she latches on. Your healthcare professional will help you with this.

## **Your Health**

A small number of women may develop serious health conditions. You are encouraged to contact a member of your healthcare team straight away or call for emergency help if you have any of the symptoms over the next pages.

Common health concerns experienced by women who have recently given birth are listed later within this leaflet, with the recommended actions from your healthcare professional also provided. If you are worried about any of these health issues, speak to your healthcare professional, who will support and advise you.

You may feel tearful, anxious or sad (this is often called the baby blues). Your midwife will discuss this with you. Baby blues is common, and the symptoms often go away without any treatment.

If you or your family notice changes in your mood or emotions that is cause for concern. Let your healthcare professional know.