

Cesarean Section discharge instructions

A Cesarean Section is a major operation, although a common one. You must recover from this, and attend your new baby, all at the same time! Here is important information to make your recovery safe and enjoyable.

Activity:

The first few days are mostly bed rest, though it is important to be up a short while every couple hours to keep your circulation going in order to prevent blood clots. Until you are walking well, you should wear your support hose. After the first few days, you may alternate periods of rest and activity. For example, you can walk around in the house or yard for a few minutes, then lay back down for an hour or so. As you progress every few days, you can advance this ratio. You may not do housework or involved meal preparation. You should let others do these things, as well as baby care like diaper changing, while you should concentrate on nursing and enjoying the baby. You may not drive until you are off all narcotic pain pills and can move normally without hesitation. You may not lift more than the baby, and you are to have nothing per vagina until six weeks postpartum and your pelvic exam in the office. Until then, your system is vulnerable to infection, and you need to heal. Furthermore, your fertility can return unannounced, at any time, even if you have not had a period.

Medication:

In the first few days after surgery, you will want to take ibuprofen (which is generic for Motrin) almost around the clock at 600 mg every six hours. It is easiest on the stomach if it is taken with food. If you need more than that, use your pain pills as prescribed. The need for both will taper off after a new days. Be careful to take only the pain pills that you need, since they can be habit forming and can cause constipation.

Bowel health after a C Section:

It is really important to avoid constipation after your C-section. Keeping your bowels moving regularly keeps you comfortable and prevents pain. It is also a measure that you are well hydrated and eating properly. Follow these steps to good bowel health:

1. Drink 8 glasses of water per day.
2. Eat 9 servings of fruit or vegetables per day, 2 each at breakfast lunch and dinner, and one each at each of your snacks.
3. Include helpful foods such as spinach and berries.
4. Use the over the counter stool softener Ducolax as needed per the instructions.

Eating Well after your C Section

It is very important to your recovery and to your milk production that you eat and drink well. As mentioned above, this should include 8 glasses of water per day, and four glasses of milk per day. If you cannot drink milk you should be taking a Calcium plus vitamin D supplement once or twice per day, separate from your prenatal. Your diet should include 3 meals plus snacks in between, which total three hundred calories more than your diet at the end of pregnancy. Continue your prenatal vitamins while you are breastfeeding and whenever you are not using contraception. Consult with us about continuing any extra iron you may have been on. Remember not to take your iron with milk products, calcium or your prenatal, lest they fail to absorb.

Bowel Function

Your bowel function will take a little time to fully return after a C Section. While you are giving it time, treat yourself well with plain yogurt as a probiotic and a source of easily digested protein. Choose favorite fruits, soups, and lighter healthy things. Once your bowel function is fully returned, your nutrition should be tip top. Ensure your diet is balanced with a selection of proteins, lots of fruits and vegetables and whole grains. Choose protein sources like natural red meats, poultry, wild salmon, legumes, and dairy and eggs. Regarding fruits and vegetables, organic is deluxe, fresh is best, and frozen is next best. Avoid canned or processed produce, because with the exception of tomato products, it is nearly empty calories. Regarding whole grains, quinoa is queen, real brown rice is great, 100% whole wheat or oat breads are good.

Smoking

Do not smoke, both for yourself and the baby. Smoking has many grave health risks, increases risks of a SIDS death, decreases milk production, and impairs healing, making it more likely that your incision will get infected and fall apart. Let us know if you would like help in quitting. There may be support programs you can attend, and of course certain medicines like Wellbutrin, which may be helpful.

Bathing

Showering is a great simple pleasure after a baby is born. However, there are some precautions. C Section incisions can be finished in two main ways: one with staples and "steri" strips, and two, by a clear or flaky glue called Indermil or Dermabond.

A stapled incision is usually dressed with gauze for a time, then after about three days is left open to air. One can place a clean maxi pad between the incision and underwear to minimize chafing. As far as bathing with a stapled incision is concerned, in the first week or two it should be covered with plastic. A brief shower can be taken and then it should be patted dry and blow-dried. If a little water gets on the incision it is not a big worry. After the first week or two the

STERIS may stay on, come off or be removed. At your follow up appointment, discuss the progress of your incision and its care. Women heal at various rates, to be sure.

If, on the other hand, you have a glue closure, you may shower more liberally. Pat the incision dry afterwards.

If you are overweight, and your incision sits under an abdominal “ pannus” or apron of fat, you have to be especially careful to take good care of it and keep a close eye on it. After bathing, and two additional times per day, blow it dry. Consider keeping a dry clean towel or maxi in the area to prevent moisture build up. Powder is widely prescribed in these cases, but I believe it does more harm than good. It is certainly not good to use when an incision is present. Baths are not appropriate for post op patients until 4-6 weeks. Give us a call to discuss this.

Post partum mood

Having a baby by any method is a life changing event, whether it is your first or seventh. Even in a near ideal delivery, there is discomfort, a little blood loss, and fatigue. There is also a new and radically different schedule and additional set of responsibilities. Finally there is a rapid drop in hormone levels. It’s no wonder one’s mood can be a little unsteady. One way to deal with this is to discuss it in advance. Then the family can have some understanding and even a plan of sorts. If there is enough help and enough advance preparation in the home, as well as good pain management and some sleep, most of the time things go well. Even then sometimes, there are the so called “ baby blues” and the random teariness. These things are mild and pass on their own in a couple weeks. If, however, any mood change is severe or prolonged, the office should be notified.

Don’t let all this information feel overwhelming. Most of it is common sense. Whatever is unclear can be discussed through the office. For various reasons, C Sections are a common mode of delivery in this day and age. Generally women recover very well. You are a part of a very large sisterhood.

Precautions

Call if you think things are not going well. Criteria for calling include, but are not limited to: Fever of 100 degree Fahrenheit or more, chills, nausea, vomiting, heavy vaginal bleeding, passage of sold tissue, foul discharge, incisional problems such as spreading redness, separation, or discharge. Reasons for calling also include excessively dark mood or tearfulness, or severe family strife. You must also promptly report signs or symptoms of mastitis, an infection in the breast, including a red streak, lump, or painful hard area, or flu-like body aches called myalgias. Don’t forget to schedule your post op appointments at one and six weeks.

Congratulations and enjoy your new baby!