

# Postpartum Care: Your Follow-up Appointment

After you give birth, your body goes through many changes to return to its pre-pregnancy health and form. Your healthcare provider will want to check your health about six weeks after delivery.

This postpartum appointment is a good time to talk to your healthcare provider about any concerns you may have. One of these concerns may be your weight. Some women lose their extra pregnancy pounds faster than others but don't be discouraged. With proper nutrition and regular exercise, you will gradually take off the extra weight.

*"As you start to sleep better and the baby starts to sleep better, you will maybe be able to say, 'Ok, now I can start exercising.'"*

Talk to your health care provider about how to ease back into your exercise routine or start a new one. Remember, it took nine months to put on those extra pounds, and it's unrealistic to expect them to go away overnight.

You may want to ask your healthcare provider about your food choices and how they can affect your baby. When breastfeeding, what you eat can pass to your baby and some choices may cause fussiness or gas. There's a lot of information available from your healthcare provider, so take advantage of it. If there's something that you don't understand, ask again.

Be sure to discuss whether or not you should continue taking your prenatal vitamins.

*"While you're breastfeeding, you want to continue taking your prenatal vitamins because, just like you were growing your baby I utero, you are still supporting the growth of your baby."*

If you plan to work after the baby is born, your healthcare provider can give you the final okay to return to your job.

Sex may or may not be on your mind. Most health care providers recommend waiting 6 weeks after delivery before resuming sexual activity. At that time, one thing you must consider is birth control and it is a good idea to talk to your healthcare provider about your birth control options.

If you are bottle feeding, your menstrual period can resume as early as four weeks after delivery or as late as several months afterwards. Many women who breast feed may not have a menstrual period for several months, or perhaps even until they stop breastfeeding. However, you can become pregnant before getting your first period, and yes, even nursing mothers can become pregnant.

Birth control pills that include estrogen can decrease your milk supply, so if you're nursing, talk to your healthcare provider about your options. You may want to consider an alternative form of contraception, such as an IUD, hormonal implant, progesterone-only birth control pills or condoms with spermicide.

If you used a diaphragm or cervical cap before your pregnancy, and you would like to continue using one, see your health care provider to have a new one fitted.

And finally, if you feel you are depressed or anxious talk to your healthcare provider about your emotions. She may recommend a support group, therapy or medication to manage your postpartum emotions.

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Your six-week postpartum healthcare appointment is a good time to address any post-pregnancy concerns you may have. Before your appointment, take some time to write down any questions you may have so you can leave your appointment assured you are healing well and ready to meet the challenges of motherhood.