

# Caring for Yourself After Cesarean Delivery

After a cesarean, your body needs time to heal.

So it's important to take good care of yourself—by getting enough rest, having good support, and staying healthy.

So remember, rest when you can.

Ask friends or family for help with things like housework, cooking, and shopping.

If you need extra support, consider asking a loved one to stay with you to help for a few days.

Otherwise, try to limit your guests and how long they stay—so you have plenty of downtime.

Ask visitors to wash their hands and not smoke around your home.

And don't let people come over if they're sick.

You'll need to give yourself time before you get back to your normal activities.

Ask your doctor when it's okay to start getting some light exercise, like taking walks with the stroller.

Avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous activity for 6 weeks, or until your doctor says it's okay.

Here are some ways to relieve soreness and help your body heal.

Ibuprofen, such as Advil or Motrin, can help with mild pain, cramps, or breast soreness.

If your doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.

And follow any instructions about caring for your incision.

Wearing a bra that's supportive and fits well, especially when you're active, can provide some comfort for sore breasts.

Placing a warm, damp cloth over your breasts can help too.

Try doing this before you breastfeed or pump milk.

If you're not breastfeeding, it's normal to have sore breasts for a week or two after delivery.

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If you do, try soothing them with ice or a cold pack wrapped in a thin cloth.

For hemorrhoids, try a cool compress or a sitz bath—a shallow bath of warm water.

Instead of using toilet paper, you can clean yourself gently with warm water squeezed from a bottle.

Talk to your doctor about birth control, when you can start having sex, and any problems you may have with breastfeeding.

You can also ask about Kegel exercises, which help strengthen your pelvic muscles.

Be sure to go to any scheduled checkups.

Also, let your partner or a close friend or loved one know how you're feeling emotionally.

It's normal to have mood swings for the first week or two after delivery.

But talk to your doctor if you feel very depressed or have symptoms— like crying often or feeling hopeless—that last more than a couple of weeks.

And know when to call for help.

Call 9-1-1 if you have thoughts of harming yourself, your baby, or another person.

Call your doctor now or get medical care right away if your vaginal bleeding seems worse; you feel dizzy or lightheaded; you have redness and swelling in your leg or groin; you have sudden swelling in your face, hands, or feet; you have a severe headache; or your incision bleeds a lot or comes open.

Call your doctor if you have signs of infection, such as increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness; red streaks leading from the incision; pus draining from the incision; or a fever.

It takes time to heal after having a cesarean, so be kind to yourself.

And if you have any questions or concerns, you can always call your doctor.