

Caring for Yourself After Vaginal Delivery

After giving birth, 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.

If your doctor says it's okay, get some light exercise each day, like going out for walks with the stroller.

But give yourself a few days to recover first.

Take it slowly, and rest when you feel tired or sore.

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.

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.

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

Caring for Yourself After Vaginal Delivery

For hemorrhoids or vaginal soreness, 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 increased pain, or a fever; you have redness and swelling in your leg or groin; you have sudden swelling in your face, hands, or feet; or you have a severe headache.

It takes time to heal after giving birth, so be kind to yourself.

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