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POSTPARTUM INSTRUCTIONS

Again, congratulations on the birth of your child. We know that you are very excited and maybe a little anxious regarding the new family life but everything is going to work out just fine. These first few weeks are going to result in some dramatic changes and we want to list a few special instructions for you with regard to the next four weeks.

ACTIVITIES:

Limit your activity after the first two weeks after the delivery, primarily taking care of yourself and your baby. Arrange for someone else to maintain the majority of the housework and abstain from any heavy lifting more than the weight of your infant. You will find during this time period that you have significantly less energy than normal and you should try to set aside time in the afternoon to at least relax if not take a short nap. Thereafter, you can gradually begin becoming more active but again, no strenuous or excessive exercise.

Doing the sitz baths as you did in the hospital will promote healing of your perineum and/or episiotomy and will provide significant comfort. If you've had a cesarean section, of course you can shower with the Steri-strips in place. If the Steri-strips have not come off on their own within ten days after the delivery, you may take them off while in the shower. During the first two weeks following the delivery you should refrain from driving although you may ride in a car. Due to the discomfort in your vagina or from the cesarean section you will be unable to move your feet quick enough to be a safe driver during this time frame. You may travel during the four weeks following the delivery but if the distance is greater than two hours please stop and stretch your legs for approximately 30 minutes.

DIETS:

Maintaining a good, well-balanced diet during the postpartum period will enhance the recovery from your pregnancy and delivery. Whether you are bottle or breastfeeding, you should continue taking prenatal vitamins and any iron or calcium that you have been on for at least four weeks following delivery.

If you are breastfeeding, there are a few things that you need to take into consideration. First, you need to significantly increase your intake of water by the least 5 to 6 glasses of water daily beyond everything else that you may eat or drink. This will significantly enhance your milk production. If you are not real good about taking in large quantities of dairy products you should supplement your calcium intake with two Calcet, Citracal, or other calcium tablets on a daily basis. Most women are eager to lose weight following delivery. If you adhere to the diet that we

discussed during your pregnancy, you should not have any problems. If however, you would like to maximize your efforts during this period, may we suggest contacting Weight Watcher's for their pregnancy or breastfeeding diet plans. DO NOT engage yourself in any "crash diet" or periods of fasting. Your body still needs good nutritional intake to recover from the pregnancy.

As the pregnancy, the postpartum period is often times complicated by constipation. It is very important that you maintain a good, well-balanced diet with a significant intake of water. Remember that other fluids are not a replacement for water as far as your bowels are concerned. Also maintain a proper intake of fruits and vegetables, as the fiber will further alleviate this problem. If need be, you may use Metamucil or Colace. In the event you may need a mild laxative you can use Milk of Magnesia: this is also safe for those of you who are breastfeeding.

MEDICATION:

If you are bottle feeding there is really no restrictions in this area. However, if you are breastfeeding most over the counter medications are fine. If questions arise you may ask your pharmacist or your pediatrician.

PERINEAL CARE:

Continue rinsing the episiotomy/perinea areas as you were doing in the hospital for two weeks following the delivery. Tub baths without any added solutions are fine and may aide in relaxation.

BREAST CARE:

If you are bottle feeding you should wear a well fitted supportive nursing bra, both during the day and night. Binding the breast with a 4" to 6" ace bandage will decrease the changes of engorgement. Ice packs to the breast and taking Tylenol as needed will help relieve any pain that may develop.

If you are breastfeeding you should wear a will fitted supportive nursing bra. Remember to apply the lanolin cream or other type of breast cream on your nipples following each feeding and then again wipe clean before the next feeding. If you have any difficulties with breastfeeding, please contact the Lactation center.

For those of your wishing to have a more personalized one-on-one instruction to help you with the breastfeeding, you may contact The Women's Center at (210) 575-0261. This company has nurses specialized in breastfeeding instruction and they will come to your home for evaluation/consultation and personalized instruction. We have had many patients who have received a great deal of benefit from their specialized instruction.

VAGINAL BLEEDING:

Bleeding on and off in small amounts may last up to 8-10 weeks. You may even pass occasional

clots less than the size of a quarter. If you are bottle feeding, your first menses should occur within six to eight weeks following the delivery.

If however, you are breastfeeding, your menses will most likely not recur for several months or until you quit breastfeeding. Either way, your first period is likely to be rather heavy and associated with more cramps than usual but do not be alarmed by this.

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE:

Please abstain from intercourse until we see you at your postpartum check. Also avoid tampons and douching. We will discuss at the time various types of contraception if this is applicable.

EXERCISE:

If you have a vaginal delivery you may begin an exercise program once you feel ready. Start slow, if you have not been exercising. Listen to your body and advance slowly. If you have a cesarean section, please wait two weeks before beginning an exercise program. You may begin a walking program but avoid weight lifting and abdominal exercises until your postpartum check. We will discuss in more detail the do's and don'ts at the time of your postpartum check up.

In summary, let us reassure you that your postpartum period will be very likely to be trouble-free and follow the normal course. However, if any of the following symptoms should occur, we would like for you to contact the office immediately.

- 1.) Fever greater than 100.4 F that is persistent.
- 2.) Excessive bright red vaginal bleeding- as if you were bleeding from a cut and changing your Pads every 10 minutes.
- 3.) Excessive breast tenderness especially associated with red streaks and fevers.
- 4.) Severe leg pains that is constant.

Take care and we will see you in four weeks.