

## **Congratulations on your new addition!!**

What an exciting and miraculous time in your family's life. The postpartum period is an exhausting, elating, and memorable time. The following information is provided to aid you with an easier transition. Once you are home from the hospital, call the office to schedule a six-week appointment.

### **Recovery**

It takes 9 months for your body to prepare itself to deliver a baby. These changes will not resolve immediately. It takes at least 6 weeks before your body will begin to return to its pre-pregnancy state. Childbirth is obviously a natural event, however, your recovery is not unlike someone who has had vaginal surgery-especially if you had a long labor or a severe tear. Your perineum is swollen and sore. The longevity of your perineal repair requires proper care (see below). You should avoid lifting anything heavier than your baby. Resume your exercise routine slowly beginning 2 weeks after delivery. Walking with partial sit-ups is an excellent starting point. Do not forget to exercise your pelvic floor muscles. Pelvic floor exercises after a vaginal delivery have been shown to greatly reduce symptoms of stress urinary incontinence. Kegel exercises should be done properly. Please see the gynecology section for instructions on how to perform these exercises. Also, ease back into your normal routine. Get plenty of rest. Take naps when your baby naps. Call on friends and family for help.

### **Perineal Wound Care**

Perineal tears are very common during vaginal deliveries. The vagina heals amazingly well. There are several important factors that will help promote proper wound healing. Avoid straining with activities such as lifting heavy objects or with bowel movements. Drink lots of water, eat a fiber rich diet and utilize stool softeners to avoid constipation. You may occasionally use a laxative or suppository if necessary. After a bowel movement, remember to wipe from front to back. While bathing do not scrub the perineum or use heavy soaps. Warm water will be adequate for cleaning. You may also use the pericare bottle provided by the hospital for cleansing. You may take tub baths. Do not use tampons, douche or have intercourse for six weeks.

### **Cesarean Section Wound Care**

Avoid lifting over ten pounds for six weeks. Do not scrub the incision. You may take tub baths, but keep the water line below the incision. You may have some drainage from your incision that lasts for several days. The incision might open slightly on the edges. You should call us immediately if you experience redness to the skin around the incision, or if you have temperatures greater than 100.4.

### **Baby Blues and Postpartum Depression**

It is very common to feel sad, angry, and anxious after the delivery. Most mothers have these feelings in a mild form, sometimes referred to as the baby blues. If these feelings are more intense and last two or more weeks, you may suffer from postpartum depression. This requires counseling and treatment. The baby blues are experienced by about 70% of mothers. Please contact the office and schedule an appointment if you think you have postpartum depression.

## **Vaginal Bleeding and Discharge**

Your bleeding will last between 4 and 6 weeks after delivery. It may be heavy at variable times. You may pass clots. You do not need to be alarmed unless you are saturating a pad an hour for more than several hours. After the bleeding stops, you will then notice a discharge that changes in color. This may last for several weeks. Your periods will return approximately 7 to 9 weeks after delivery if you are not breastfeeding. If you are breastfeeding, your periods may not return for several months.

## **Breast Care**

Your breasts will become engorged with milk on the third or fourth postpartum day. This can be painful. If you are not breastfeeding, ice packs and a supportive bra may help. Breastfeeding moms should wash the nipples with water only. Use lanolin, Vitamin E, or A&D ointment for sore nipples. If you experience redness to the breast with temperatures above 100.4, call your physician.

## **Birth Control**

You may ovulate as early as 28 days after your delivery. There are many new birth control options. Most breastfeeding women choose progesterone only pills. The “mini pill” will not affect your milk production. It is important to take your pills at the exact same time every day. Other contraceptive options include birth control pills, vaginal inserts, contraceptive patches, and intrauterine devices. Discuss these options with your physician to decide which is right for you.

