

# SELF-CARE POSTPARTUM DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

## Sample Form

### Self-Care Postpartum Discharge Instructions

It is advised to return to your health care provider for a check-up in four to six weeks or as instructed.

Follow-Up Health Care Provider Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Discharge Medication(s):

Name	Dose	Time(s)	Purpose

### Activity:

- Gradually increase your daily activities until you are back to your normal routine.
- Rest frequently.
- No lifting, pushing, or pulling for the first two to four weeks.

### Bathing:

- Try relaxing in the tub several times a day.
- Clean and rinse the bathtub after every use.

### Care of Stitches:

- You should feel less discomfort every day from any stitches received.
- Perineal stitches will dissolve within five to seven days.
- Surgical stitches may need to be removed.
- You may shower with the stitches or clips.
- Drip plain or soapy water over the incision and dry gently with a clean towel.

### Breast Care:

- Your breasts and nipples may have changed and/or grown in size. Wearing a well-fitted, supportive bra (with no under-

wire), day and night, may be more comfortable as your body adjusts to these changes.

- Wear breast pads (cotton is best) until your breasts stop leaking. Leaking may continue for several weeks.
- Avoid using any heat or hot water on your breasts, as this may increase swelling.
- If your breasts continue to be uncomfortable, you may try the following:
  - Lay on your back to elevate the breasts.
  - Apply ice packs made of crushed ice in plastic bags that will mold to your breasts (frozen bags of vegetables work well). Be sure to have one layer of cloth (e.g., a towel) between your breasts and the ice pack. Apply for periods of 10 to 15 minutes.
  - Place cold, clean, green cabbage leaves on your breasts, lining your bra. Change the leaves as they become warm and wilted.

### Diet:

- Drink plenty of water and fruit juices.
- Eat foods high in fiber (bran, broccoli, cauliflower, fruit, etc.) to help keep your bowel movements regular, and eat foods rich in calcium (dark-green leafy vegetables, milk, yogurt, etc.).

### Elimination:

- To help prevent infection, always wipe from front to back after going to the toilet and clean your bottom with warm tap water using the "Peri-bottle" (received during hospital stay) after you urinate or have a bowel movement.

### Douching/Tampons/Sex:

- Do not douche or use tampons within the first six weeks after discharge.
- It is your personal choice as to when you resume sexual intercourse. Once the bleeding has stopped, it is all right to have intercourse, but only when you feel ready. Your health care provider may advise you to wait four to six weeks, but you and your partner will know what is comfortable.
- You may find your vagina feels dry, making sex uncomfortable. This can last several months due to changing hormone levels. To help lubricate your vagina, you may purchase a water-soluble lubricant (e.g., K-Y Jelly) from your local drug store. This will act as a lubricant to help make intercourse more comfortable.

### Bleeding:

- Vaginal flow will last up to six weeks.
- It is important that you change your pad on a regular basis.
- Your menstrual period may occur as early as six weeks to two months after your discharge from the hospital.

### Medications:

- Continue to take vitamins for six weeks after discharge.
- Take Tylenol or ibuprofen for pain.
- Use laxatives for constipation.

### Key Questions:

Your hormones have a major impact on your feelings and emotions. Hormone imbalances may cause changes in your mood, creating unfamiliar thoughts and actions. Support is available to help you understand and cope with these changes in mood.

If you answer “yes” to any of the following questions, contact your health care provider regarding your care.

1. Are you having trouble sleeping?	Yes	No
2. Are you feeling isolated?	Yes	No
3. Have you lost your appetite?	Yes	No
4. Are you having thoughts about hurting yourself or your baby?	Yes	No

### Warning Signs Checklist:

Notify your health care provider immediately if you are experiencing any of the following:

- **Heavy bleeding from the vagina (blood is bright-red and soaks a sanitary pad in an hour or less); normal bleeding decreases in amount over time and is:**
  - bright-red (lasts two to three days)
  - pinkish or brown (lasts from about the third to the tenth day)
  - creamy or yellow (usually lasts one to two weeks)
- Discharge from the vagina that has a bad odor
- Temperature over 100.4°F (38°C), or you feel cold and have the “chills” (you are shivering)
- Urination (pee) that is painful, difficult, or too frequent
- Difficulty having a bowel movement
- Painful, very red, and swollen incision, or leaking of any fluids
- Breasts that are full and/or painful (swollen, hot, tight, itchy, lumpy, shiny, flat nipples, or sore spots with flu-like symptoms)
- Pain that becomes worse
- Trouble breathing, dizziness, or faintness
- Crying spells or mood swings that feel out of control
- Pain, redness, warmth, or firmness in the lower leg (calf)