2018-19 ***Postpartum Guidelines- Brigitte Rhody- Garrison, CNM***

Congratulations on the birth of your baby! Here are a few tips to help you in the days and weeks ahead as you rest and recuperate.

Rest is essential for a good, complete recovery. For the first week, it is best not to have any responsibilities besides caring for yourself and your newborn. A maximum of one trip up and down the stairs each day is a good goal. After the first week, you can increase your activity as you feel up to it. Be sure to take frequent naps (at least two each day, even if you do not fall asleep), and rest whenever you get tired. You will feel better in the end if you avoid overdoing it at the beginning. Vigorous exercise should wait until after your six-week postpartum check. Avoid lifting anything heavier than your baby during this time.

Bleeding: Soaking one pad in half an hour or two pads in one hour is too much bleeding. If the bleeding seems too heavy, rub your uterus to make it contract, empty your bladder, nurse the baby, and call. It is normal to have a few egg-sized clots during the first 24 hours. Over a few days, the bleeding will decrease and get lighter, changing from pink to brown to yellow/ white. An increase in bright red bleeding indicates you are doing too much too fast, and need to step back and rest.

Nutrition is vital to help your body heal and provide milk for your baby, just as it was important during your pregnancy to grow a healthy baby. Get plenty of protein, fiber, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Continue taking your prenatal vitamins. Drink at least 3-4 quarts of fluids (especially water) every day. Fluids help to replace lost blood volume and support milk supply. Try to drink a glass or two of water every time you nurse the baby.

Breastfeeding: Nurse your baby frequently. After your milk comes in, he will probably only need to nurse about every 2-3 hours during the day, and may go a little longer (no more than 6 hours) at night. Most newborns need a minimum of eight feedings each day. Good positioning and latch are important to avoid sore nipples. Try alternating positions and be patient to make sure your baby gets a good latch. Most of the areola should be in his mouth. Being comfortable and relaxing during nursing is good for you and helps your milk let down. If your nipples become sore, you can apply vitamin E oil (from a broken capsule) or lanolin ointment.

After-pains will decrease in a few days. To help with the cramps, you can take up to 2,000 mg of calcium/day, 400-800 mg of ibuprofen (Advil) every 4-6 hours,. You can also try drinking soothing teas, such as red raspberry leaf or chamomile. Keeping your bladder empty and laying on your stomach, with a small pillow under your abdomen, may also help. It will probably feel uncomfortable at first, but bring relief after about 5 minutes. Massaging uterus daily during nursing and on toilet will also speed recovery.

Perineum: Ice may feel good and will reduce swelling for the first 24 hours. A warm daily soaking bath helps to keep the area clean and promote healing. Add sea salt to make a concentrated solution, or lavender as a tea or oil (5-7 drops in 8" of tub water) for healing. Avoid any soap on your perineum. After the soak, gently pat and blow dry vaginal area. Keep your knees together as much as possible for 2 weeks if you tore at all. . Kegel exercises also aid in healing, and you should begin them ASAP. Some kinds of tears might make them painful, which is an indication to wait a week or two for healing.

Elimination: You will need to urinate frequently for the first day or so. Try to go at least every 2 hours while you are awake to keep your bladder empty and prevent excess bleeding. You can use warm water in a squeeze bottle to dilute the urine and avoid irritating your perineum. It is also a good way to keep your perineum clean, and you should pat dry rather than wipe the first few days. You may not have a bowel movement for a day or so. Drinking plenty of fluids and a high fiber diet will help to prevent constipation. You may want to support your perineum with a couple of fingers wrapped in toilet paper for the first few BMs. Call if you have not had a bowel movement in two days.

Signs of Infection: Warning signs include a rise in temperature (anything over 100°F), raising pulse (>100), pain in your uterus or abdomen, foul smelling or increased discharge, chills, or flu-like symptoms. Call immediately as these could be signs of infection.

Hormones: Over the next few days and weeks, you will probably experience some odd emotional effects as your hormones change drastically from pregnancy to breastfeeding. You may cry easily or be upset by little things. This is common and will usually pass quickly with plenty of rest. Call if you are worried or just need to talk.

Physical relations: You need to wait until all bleeding has stopped. Many would advise couples to abstain for 6 weeks to allow for your recovery.