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General Recommendations for the Postpartum Period Information for Patients

Clinic of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

In besten Händen, dem Leben zuliebe.

Dear patients and parents,

Our team of nurses, midwives, social workers, and doctors congratulates you on the birth of your child / children.

We are honoured that you chose our clinic, and we wish you and your loved ones all the best for the start of your journey together as a family. In the first days in our postnatal ward, we are here to guide and assist you, so that you are well informed when you are discharged home with your newborn baby.

This brochure summarises the most important information about postnatal care. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact us at any time.

Yours sincerely,

**Prof. Dr. med.
Rüdiger Klapdor, MBA**
*Chief Physician
Clinic of Obstetrics
and Gynaecology*



Postpartum Period

The first six to eight weeks following your delivery is called the postpartum period. During this time your body, in particular your uterus, pelvic floor, and abdominal wall, recover from the birth and the pregnancy and return to their non-pregnant state. For example, directly after giving birth your uterus weighs approximately 1000 g, while by the end of the postpartum period it will have reduced to approximately 50 g.

Vaginal Discharge / Bleeding (Lochia)

After the placenta detaches from the uterus, a wound is formed. The wound repair, which occurs gradually over the next two to six weeks, is what causes the vaginal discharge in the postpartum period. This discharge is called “lochia”. The colour of lochia gradually changes from red to pink, then brown and finally yellow or off-white. The amount of discharge will also gradually decrease and then stop after two to six weeks. During this time the uterus is prone to infections, therefore you should only use sanitary napkins / pads, not tampons.

Midwife

Your midwife will give you important advice and support during the first weeks with your newborn baby, and can, for example, assist with breastfeeding. If you need help finding a midwife, please let us know.

Postnatal Exercise

If you have given birth vaginally, you should directly begin with gentle exercises for your pelvic floor and abdominal wall, and slowly increase the intensity depending on how you feel. After a **c-section delivery**, light, everyday movements are allowed and important, however more strenuous exercises should be avoided for approximately 8 weeks. After the postpartum period is completed (6–8 weeks after birth), we recommend you take part in a postnatal exercise class. Ask your midwife or register for one of our courses in our parent’s center (“Elternzentrum”).

Postpartum Fever

General hand- and body hygiene is especially important in the postpartum period. Severe complications resulting from postpartum infections have become rare because of improved hygienic standards.

Signs of a postpartum uterus infection can include:

- fever or shivering
- nausea, vomiting or a general feeling of being unwell
- headaches or muscle pains
- a sore and tender lower abdomen (uterus pain)
- absent or unpleasant vaginal discharge

Signs for a postpartum breast infection include fever, redness, swelling and pain in one breast. In such cases, you should contact your midwife, gynaecologist or present to our clinic.

Breastfeeding

Breast milk provides ideal nutrition for your newborn. It contains antibodies, which help protect your baby from infections, and also reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Breast feeding helps the uterus contract, and reduces your obesity and disease risk, for example for breast and ovarian cancer.

We recommend that you breast feed according to your baby's needs. You should keep your baby close and look for cues that your baby wants to feed. If your newborn does not regularly wake up on his/her own, you can wake them to feed. Skin to skin contact is also helpful and can positively influence long term milk production.

There are breastfeeding groups in which you can share experiences with other mothers and get professional advice from breastfeeding consultants / midwives.

Diet and Nutrition

There are no explicitly forbidden foods for the breastfeeding period. A healthy and balanced diet is most important. We recommend a daily intake of 200 micrograms of iodine during the entire breastfeeding period. Iodine is, among other things, important for your child's brain development and is passed on through breast milk. When your haemoglobin (Hb) level is low, we recommend that you take iron supplements for at least 6 weeks. You can find detailed information on diet and nutrition from the federal department for nutrition ("Bundesamt für Ernährung") at www.gesund-ins-leben.de.

Deep Vein Thrombosis Prophylaxis

If you have multiple thrombosis risk factors, we may recommend that you receive a daily thrombosis prophylaxis for 1–6 weeks during the postpartum period.

Hormonal Changes

Over 50 % of women experience the "baby blues" and feel a little overwhelmed, anxious, or sad after giving birth. This is totally normal and usually passes within 10 days. However, if such feelings continue for a longer period of time, this can be a sign of postnatal depression. Please don't be afraid to seek help; try talking to a friend, get in contact with your midwife or gynaecologist or let us know, so that we can help you. You can find information online at www.schatten-und-licht.de

Contraception while Breastfeeding

We recommend using condoms for contraception during the postpartum period, as they also provide protection against infections. Speak to your gynaecologist at your first visit about which contraception is best suited to you once the postpartum period is over.

Paediatric Care

Do you already have a paediatrician for your baby? The U2, which should take place between the 3rd and

10th day, usually takes place in hospital. The next examination – the U3 – takes place after 4–5 weeks. You can find all of the dates for U-examinations on the front page of your yellow “Kinderheft”.

Birth Registration

Hand the large white envelope with the completed documents in at the front desk (main entrance) when you leave the hospital. The documents will be sent to the registry office for you. The certificates will be posted to you at home.

Child Support

You can apply for child support (“Kindergeld”) together with the birth registration using the combined document in the white envelope.

Health Insurance

You will need to send your child’s birth certificate to your health insurance company to apply for your child’s health insurance.

Parental Allowance

Parental allowance (“Elterngeld”) will be paid retrospectively for the last three months prior to your application. You can find further information at the parental allowance offices or at the federal department for family affairs (“Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend”).

“Three things remain
with us from paradise:
stars, flowers and
children.”

Dante Alighieri



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