

Postpartum Recovery & The Fourth Trimester

Congratulations! Mission accomplished! Now that labour and birth are behind you it's time to rest, recover, and facilitate physical healing. Optimal recovery requires rest! Set boundaries, ask for help and consider hiring a Doula!

*Cesarean recovery differs slightly! Ask your Doula for more info.

Hours After Birth

- Your healthcare provider might use fundal massage to stimulate the uterus to contract. This helps keep the uterus firm and prevents heavy blood loss.
- You may experience afterpains - pain/discomfort as the uterus contracts. Afterpains increase with each birth and typically disappear 1 week postpartum.
- Ibuprofen is typically prescribed for afterpains. You can ask your healthcare provider about this before discharge.

Weeks After Birth

- In the 6-weeks post-birth, the uterus returns to its pre-pregnancy size.

Lochia Rubra - Lasts 3 to 4 Days.



Like a heavy menstrual period. May have small clots. Smells fleshy like menstrual blood.

Lochia Serosa - Lasts 4 to 10 Days.



Moderate to a small amount. Overactivity and stress can increase/change from Serosa back to Rubra.

Lochia Alba - Lasts 10 to 28 Days.



A small amount of creamy, whiteish discharge gradually disappears.

The total volume of postpartum "lochia" is typically between 200-500 ml and can last from 3-6 weeks.

Resuming Your Cycle

- Menstruation typically resumes 4 to 8 weeks postpartum and can be (but is not always) delayed by breastfeeding.
- Your first few cycles may be heavier and longer than usual OR lighter and shorter than usual but will return to normal eventually.



Postpartum Healing Recommendations

- Ice packs or "pad-sicles" can help reduce swelling.
- After or during urination, use a peri-bottle to clean yourself with warm water. Be sure to spray front to back to avoid infection from bacteria around the rectal area. Pat, don't wipe yourself dry also front to back.
- If you are struggling to relax in order to urinate, putting a drop or two of peppermint oil in the toilet before can stimulate the right muscles to relax making it easier.
- You may be constipated or have fear around having a bowel movement post-birth. A stool softener (NOT a laxative) can help.
- Drink lots of water and eat fresh and dried fruits/veggies to prevent constipation.
- It's common to develop hemorrhoids post-birth. Most will disappear 1 month postpartum. Witch hazel, sitz baths and avoiding heavy lifting and constipation can help!
- Do not use tampons before your postpartum follow-up with your healthcare provider. Do not use Douche products.
- Sitz baths can help reduce soreness. If you have had a cesarean, follow your provider's instructions regarding baths.
- A doughnut pillow or rolled-up towel shaped into a circle can help take the pressure off your perineum while sitting.
- Sitting on a firm surface may feel more comfortable if you have stitches.
- Lay down as much as possible in the first 6 weeks postpartum. When sitting and standing, gravity can increase swelling and cause pelvic floor ache/pain.
- Be sure to follow your healthcare practitioner's recovery instructions.