

GOING HOME WITH YOUR BABY

INFORMATION FOR NEW PARENTS

**BC WOMEN'S
HOSPITAL+
HEALTH CENTRE**
Provincial Health Services Authority



PARENT'S NAME

BABY'S NAME

BABY'S BIRTH DATE

BABY'S GESTATIONAL AGE

TYPE OF DELIVERY

Vaginal

Vacuum

Forceps

Caesarean

BABY'S BIRTH WEIGHT

BABY'S DISCHARGE WEIGHT

BABY'S HEAD CIRCUMFERENCE

BABY'S LENGTH

MEDICATION TO TAKE AT HOME (IF INDICATED BY YOUR PROVIDER):

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol): _____
- Ibuprofen: _____
- Docusate: _____
- Other: _____

FEEDING PLAN

BREASTFEEDING

- Breastfeed your baby at least 8 times in 24 hours
- Hand express/pump for _____ minutes

BREASTFEEDING WITH SUPPLEMENTATION (AS NEEDED)

Supplement with:

- Mother's own milk (MOM): _____ (amount)
- Pasteurized human donor milk (PHDM): _____ (amount)
- Formula: _____ (amount/frequency)

EXCLUSIVE FORMULA FEEDING: _____ (amount/frequency)

CALL IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED SUPPORT:

- Community health nurse
- Midwife: _____
- Doctor: _____
- BCW lactation consultants 604-875-2282
- Breastfeeding clinic 604-875-3743

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE BIRTH OF YOUR BABY!

As a new parent you may have questions about what to expect following the birth of your baby. This booklet is organized to follow your journey through the hospital immediately following delivery and provides information for when you and your baby are home.

This booklet is a companion to the bcwomens.ca website. Keywords have been highlighted in each section under “resources + support” to help you find related information on bcwomens.ca.



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NEWBORN TESTS + PROCEDURES

A few tests and procedures are offered for your newborn during the first few days after birth. These are routine and recommended for promoting optimal health for both you and your baby. However, it is still your decision whether your baby has these tests or procedures. You can decline any of these tests or procedures. Discuss with your doctor or midwife.

You can help your baby during these procedures by

- Holding your baby skin-to-skin (baby's bare chest to your bare chest) and/or
- Feeding your baby during the procedure if possible, or right after the procedure

Procedures done immediately after birth

- Vitamin K injection
- Erythromycin antibiotic eye ointment

Procedures done during your hospital stay

- Newborn Screening: a blood test to screen for 24 rare but treatable conditions
- Bilirubin Screening: a blood test for jaundice
- Newborn Hearing test
- Screening for Critical Congenital Heart Defects (CCHD)

RESOURCES + SUPPORT

Visit bcwomens.ca and search for these topics:

- [Newborn tests and procedures](#)
- [Caring for your newborn](#)

OTHER WEBSITES

HealthLinkBC.ca
Babies Best Chance

PerinatalServicesBC.ca
Newborn Screening Program



CARING FOR YOURSELF

Having a baby affects the whole family physically, emotionally and mentally but will affect you, who has given birth, the most. You need rest, good nutrition, exercise and plenty of help in the first few weeks. Caring for yourself will give you the strength to care for your family.

HAND HYGIENE

Hand-washing is one of the most effective ways to prevent infection. Wash or use hand sanitizers before touching your wound, after diaper changes, and before feeding your baby and/or expressing milk.

YOUR BODY

BREASTS

Your breasts will produce colostrum (early milk) until your mature milk comes in. It is normal for your breasts to feel large, heavy and tender for a few days after delivery as your milk increases in amount and changes to mature milk. Mature milk will usually come in between day 2 and day 5.

How you can help yourself

- Breastfeed whenever your baby shows signs of hunger (licking lips, smacking lips, sucking)
- Place a warm pad (e.g., a warm wash cloth) on your breasts before feeding to help them release milk
- Place a cold pad on your breasts after feeding to ease discomfort

Call your healthcare provider if you have signs of mastitis (breast infection):

- Fever greater than 38°C
- Very swollen, sore, or red areas on your breasts
- General flu-like aches and chills



BELLY

Cramps (after pains) are common after birth as your uterus contracts to return to its regular size. Cramping is often more intense when breastfeeding. It takes about 6 weeks for your uterus to return to normal size.

To manage your cramps, take ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol).

If you had a c-section (caesarean) birth you may have staples or stitches in your lower abdomen. Staples will be taken out before you leave the hospital; stitches will dissolve on their own within 2 weeks. It is common to feel tender and numb around the incision (cut).

How you can help yourself

- Keep the incision clean and dry
- Shower using mild soap and warm water and only pat yourself dry
- Give yourself time to heal by resting and not doing too much
- Try not to lift anything heavier than your baby
- Do not drive until you are able to move easily and without pain. Driving may require sudden movements that cause discomfort

Call your healthcare provider if you had a c-section and notice any of the following:

- Redness around the incision (cut)
- Leaking from the incision
- Bleeding from the incision
- Worsening pain
- Fever greater than 38°C or chills
- Opening of the incision

BLADDER

Having a baby can stretch and weaken the pelvic floor muscles and occasionally affect the nerves controlling the bladder. Leaking urine is common but most problems with leaking go away within 3 months of delivery.

How you can help yourself

- Empty your bladder frequently in the first few days after delivery
- Attend the postpartum physiotherapy class at BC Women's to learn how to find your pelvic floor muscles and do muscle strengthening exercises correctly

Call your healthcare provider if you have

- Severe pain when urinating
- Constant leaking
- Leaking urine for more than 6 weeks after delivery

BOWELS

You may feel blocked or constipated the first few days after having a baby.

How you can help yourself

- Drink lots of water and eat high-fibre foods
- Take stool softeners (only use these for 5 days)
- Talk to a BC Women's physiotherapist about pelvic floor retraining

Call your healthcare provider if you have

- Not had a bowel movement for more than 3 days after delivery
- Ongoing problems with constipation
- Are unable to control your stool

HEMORRHOIDS

Swelling near your rectum/anus. It is common to develop hemorrhoids after having a baby, especially after a vaginal delivery.

How you can help yourself

- Use a hemorrhoid cream
- Avoid straining during bowel movements
- Rest lying down to relieve pressure and reduce swelling or pain
- Take a sitz bath (sit in water up to the hips) for 10 minutes, 3 times a day starting 24 hours after delivery

Call your healthcare provider if you

- Have blood in your stool (poo)
- Have painful hemorrhoids

BLEEDING

Vaginal bleeding can last up to 6 weeks following delivery. For 2-3 days after delivery, the blood will be bright red and the flow heavy. Bleeding will slow down and change to a reddish-brown colour, then a pinky-white colour before it stops. Exercise may cause increased bleeding. This is common and not a cause for concern.

How you can help yourself

- We recommend using sanitary pads. We do not recommend using tampons
- If you had a vaginal tear, change your pad every 4 hours to reduce the chance of infection

Call your healthcare provider if you have

- Bright red, heavy bleeding even when resting
- Blood clots larger than a loonie over several hours
- Bleeding that fills a large pad within 1 hour
- Bleeding that lasts beyond 6 weeks

VAGINA

You may have had vaginal tearing during delivery, or an episiotomy (cut) requiring stitches. Your vaginal area will take time to heal. It is common to feel tender and sore for a few days or longer. Stitches will dissolve on their own.

How you can help yourself

- Place a cold compress or frozen sanitary pad wrapped in a thin cloth on the sore area for 10 minutes at a time for relief
- Have a warm sitz bath to ease pain (sit in water up to the hips) for 10 minutes, 3 times a day starting 24 hours after delivery
- Take ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) for pain
- Rest lying down to relieve the pressure and reduce swelling

Call your healthcare provider if you have

- Vaginal pain that is getting worse
- Bad smelling discharge (fluid coming out of your vagina)
- Bleeding that fills a large pad within 1 hour

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Start moving right away after you give birth but increase your activity gradually. It takes time to heal.

How you can help yourself

- Balance rest with activity
- Attend a postpartum physiotherapy class at BC Women's

Postpartum physiotherapy classes will teach you:

- To recognize the signs of healthy recovery in the days, weeks, and months after delivery
- To take care of yourself while taking care of your newborn
- To begin early, safe exercise after your vaginal or c-section birth
- To manage ongoing back or pelvic pain, leaking urine, gas or stool issues, bulging abdominal muscles, and/or pain or numbness in your hands



YOUR MOOD

About 80% of women feel ‘baby blues’ within 3-5 days of giving birth. These ‘baby blues’ are a result of normal hormonal changes that can lead to rapid mood swings, crying for no reason, or difficulty sleeping. These feelings usually go away within 2 weeks and usually do not require medical treatment.

How you can help yourself

- Eat a well-balanced, nutritious diet
- Move your body every day (walking, stretching)
- Sleep and rest when you can
- Ask family, friends and healthcare providers for help when you feel overwhelmed or have mood swings

Call your healthcare provider if you

- Feel sad or anxious most days for more than two weeks
- Feel irritable or angry
- Feel guilty or worthless
- Feel hopeless or overwhelmed
- Have difficulty managing daily activities or caring for your baby

Get help immediately if you are having thoughts of harming yourself, your baby or someone else. Call the free provincial distress line (1-800-784-2433), 911, or go to a hospital emergency room.

SEX + BIRTH CONTROL

You may feel like having sex within days of delivering, or not until much later, even weeks or months later. It is best to wait until stitches or tears have healed and bleeding has lessened before having any sex involving the vagina.

If you are not planning on getting pregnant, it is important to use birth control if you have vaginal intercourse with a male partner. You can become pregnant shortly after giving birth, even if you are breastfeeding, and even if your period has not yet returned. Speak with your care provider about birth control options.

RESOURCES + SUPPORT

Visit bcwomens.ca and search for these topics:

- [Caring for yourself after birth](#)
- [Continence clinic](#)
- [Eating well](#)
- [Exercise and pregnancy](#)
- [Physiotherapy](#)
- [Postpartum mood](#)

OR CALL

604-875-2126

to make an appointment with a physiotherapist

604-875-3137

to make an appointment at the Continence clinic

FREE PROVINCIAL
DISTRESS LINE AT
1-800-784-2433



CARING FOR YOUR NEWBORN

Bringing your new baby home can be a time of joy and excitement. It is also normal to feel nervous. Try to be patient with yourself as it takes time to get to know your baby and understand their needs. As you learn to care for your baby, your confidence will grow.

UMBILICAL CORD CARE

A small piece of the baby's umbilical cord remains attached at the belly button. This will dry up, turn black and usually fall off in 5 to 15 days. It is normal to see a few drops of blood at the belly button as the cord separates; this is not painful to the baby.

Caring for the cord

- Keep the cord clean and dry to prevent infection
- Use water on a cotton-tipped swab or washcloth to clean gently around the base of the cord; wipe away any cord discharge
- Clean around the base of the cord after bathing and at diaper changes

Call your healthcare provider if you are concerned about redness, swelling, or stickiness (pus) coming from the cord.

BATHING

Giving your newborn a bath can be an enjoyable experience for you and your baby. Some babies love bathing while others need time to get used to it.

Remember to never leave your baby alone in the bath for any reason.

CRYING

When your baby cries, start with the basics to soothe them: feed your baby, change their diaper, change their position, or give them extra cuddles to help them settle. If they still do not stop crying, this doesn't mean you are doing something wrong, sometimes babies just need to cry.

If your baby's crying makes you feel like shaking or hitting your baby, take a short time-out:

- Put your baby down in a safe place (like a crib)
- Take a few minutes for yourself in another room
- Plug your ears or play loud music if needed
- Call another trusted adult for help
- Do not pick up your baby again until these feelings have passed

Call your healthcare provider if you are having trouble managing your emotions or dealing with your baby's crying. Remember, this stage will not last forever.

See the
**THE PERIOD OF
PURPLE CRYING**
insert included
in this booklet.

SLEEP

Many newborns sleep on average 16 out of 24 hours but may only sleep a few hours at a time. It is normal for a newborn to wake often at night to feed.

How you can help your baby

- Calmly bathing, cuddling, and/or singing in a dimly lit room may help your baby settle to sleep
- Avoid falling asleep with your baby in a chair or on the couch as this can be unsafe for the baby
- Having your baby sleep on a separate sleep surface in the same room as you for the first six months helps keep your baby safe

Call your healthcare provider if you have concerns about your baby's sleep.

SAFETY

Your baby's safety is one of your biggest priorities. There are many ways to keep your baby safe.

- 1 Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) refers to when a seemingly healthy baby under one year of age dies unexpectedly while sleeping. Create a safe sleep space for your baby to lower the risk of injury and SIDS.
- 2 Buy a car seat and use baby equipment that meets Canadian national safety standards. Always check the expiry year on the car seat before using it. It is not recommended to buy a used car seat.
- 3 Prevent burns by putting your baby down when cooking or smoking/vaping and keeping hot drinks (such as coffee, tea) in a travel cup with a lid.
- 4 Check the temperature of baby bottles on the inside of your wrist; milk should be lukewarm, not hot or cold. Do not microwave human milk or formula. It can be made warm enough by sitting the bottle in warm water.
- 5 Check baby's bath water temperature by using your elbow; water should be lukewarm, not hot or cold.
- 6 Prevent falls by keeping one hand on your baby at all times if they are on a bed, change table, or other place where they could fall.

RESOURCES + SUPPORT

Visit bcwomens.ca and search for these topics:

- [Caring for your baby](#)
- [Bath time: how to bathe your baby](#)
- [Jaundice and your newborn](#)
- [Safer sleep](#)
- [Car seat checklist](#)
- [Newborn and infant safety](#)



BREASTFEEDING YOUR BABY

WHY BREASTFEED?

Breast milk contains everything your baby needs. It is the natural food for your baby and provides the best nutrition.

As a Baby-Friendly designated hospital, BC Women's supports you to make informed decisions about your care, including how to feed your baby.

Breastfeeding is a skill that takes time to learn. Help is available. Speak with your healthcare provider, a community health nurse or a lactation consultant if you have questions or concerns.

WHEN BREASTFEEDING ISN'T POSSIBLE

You may not be able to breastfeed, or you may choose not to. If you have made an informed decision to formula feed we will support you.

When using a bottle, practice responsive bottle feeding. Responsive bottle feeding is thought to be less stressful for your baby, reduces the risk of overfeeding, and more closely mimics breastfeeding than traditional bottle feeding.

SKIN-TO-SKIN



Skin-to-skin care (STS) is important for all babies. STS care immediately after birth helps babies recover from their birth – they are warmer, less stressed and cry less. It helps their heart rate and breathing. Regardless of how you feed your baby, cuddle your baby STS to enjoy the amazing benefits.

As your baby grows, continue skin-to-skin holding every day for the first month or so and whenever your baby needs comfort. Your partner or another trusted person can hold your baby skin-to-skin and provide your baby with some of the same benefits.

“I’M HUNGRY” EARLY FEEDING CUES:

- MOUTH OPENING
- SMACKING LIPS
- YAWNING

“I’M REALLY HUNGRY” FEEDING CUES:

- RESTLESSNESS
- SUCKING, COOING OR SIGNING NOISES
- HAND-TO-MOUTH MOTIONS

“CALM ME, THEN FEED ME” LATE FEEDING CUES:

- CRYING
- FUSSING
- AGITATED

FEED OFTEN

Babies need to feed day and night. Make sure your baby:

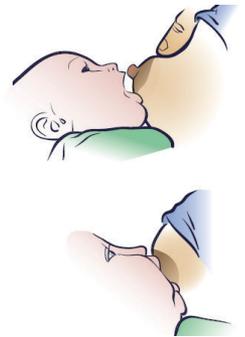
- Feeds 8 or more times in 24 hours (follow your baby’s hunger cues)
- Feeds with strong sucking and swallowing
- Has plenty of wet and dirty diapers
- Gains weight steadily

LATCHING: HOW TO

Latching is when your baby takes your breast into its mouth and begins to suck. Getting a good latch helps your baby suck well and get milk easily. It also helps prevent sore nipples.

Helping your baby latch

- 1 Make yourself comfortable.
- 2 Hold your baby skin-to-skin.
- 3 Position your baby close to you; there are several positions that may work for you.
- 4 Support your baby’s upper back and neck with the palm of your hand. Don’t cup or push on your baby’s head.
- 5 Bring your baby to your breast, positioning their nose close to your nipple.
- 6 Stroke your nipple back and forth against your baby’s upper lip (nipple to nose).
- 7 Wait for your baby to open their mouth wide (like a yawn).
- 8 When your baby opens wide, bring your baby onto the breast or allow your baby to latch themselves.
- 9 Continue to support your baby while they are feeding to help keep the baby latched deeply on the breast.



HOW TO KNOW YOUR BABY IS GETTING ENOUGH MILK

If your baby is content after feeding, alert and active at other times and growing well, your baby is likely getting enough milk.

AGE OF INFANT	OTHER SIGNS YOUR BABY IS GETTING ENOUGH MILK
DAY 2-4	Number of wet diapers usually is the same as days of life. Day 2 = 2 wet diapers Day 3 = 3 wet diapers Day 4 = 4 wet diapers 2-3 dirty diapers per day
DAY 5+	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5-6 wet diapers: pale yellow pee• 1-3 soiled diapers: 1 large poop or 3 smaller poops golden yellow in colour• Baby starts to gain weight (120-240 grams per week)

PRACTICE, PATIENCE AND SUPPORT

Learning to breastfeed can take time. Practice, patience and support can help you reach your breastfeeding goals. Discuss your breastfeeding questions and concerns with your community health nurse, midwife or healthcare provider.

RESOURCES + SUPPORT

Visit bcwomens.ca and search for these topics:

- Breastfeeding your baby
- Breastfeeding clinic
- Feeding cues
- PSBC Breastfeeding My Baby guide
- Baby's Best Chance

OR CALL

604 875-2282

to speak to a lactation consultant

811 - HealthLink BC

for free advice from a public health nurse





GETTING HELP

Go to *emergency* at your local hospital if you notice any of these signs in your baby:

- Trouble breathing:
 - fast breathing (more than 60 breaths in a minute)
 - moaning or making wheezy sounds
- Fever of 37.8°C or 100.4°F or more
- Temperature below 36°C or 98°F after warming for at least one hour with skin-to-skin cuddling, warm blankets or extra clothing
- Vomiting forcefully several times. This does not include small amounts of spitting up following a feeding
- Green mucus spit-up

Contact your family doctor or midwife if you notice any of these signs in your baby:

- Feeds less than 8 times in 24 hours (has black or dark coloured stools (poop) after day 4 or 72 hours after birth)
- Fewer than 3 stools (poops) or fewer than 6 wet diapers in 24 hours
- Unusually sleepy, fussy or restless

Contact your family doctor if you notice any of these signs in yourself:

- If you feel like you have the flu
- If your nipples hurt
- If your breasts feel hard and painful

RESOURCES + SUPPORT

Visit bcwomens.ca and search for these topics:

- [When to seek help](#)
- [Caring for yourself after birth](#)

OR CALL

Your family doctor:

or midwife:

811 - HealthLink BC

For free advice from a public health nurse, to find a clinic near you, or to book a home visit

**BCW Breastfeeding clinic
604-875-3743**

**BC WOMEN'S
HOSPITAL+
HEALTH CENTRE**

Provincial Health Services Authority



**Provincial Health
Services Authority**

Province-wide solutions.
Better health.

Thanks to the many healthcare providers, especially BC Women's Releasing Time to Care team, and all the parents who contributed to making this resource.

bcwomens.ca

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