



Aches and Pains After Giving Birth

Managing Your Pain and Self Medications

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Discomfort and Pain After You Give Birth

Many women feel pain and discomfort after giving birth. The time after giving birth is also called post partum.

- Your **muscles** will be sore and tired. You may notice this more in your upper and lower back and legs for the first few weeks after giving birth.
- You will keep having stomach pain and cramping for the first few days after you have a baby. These pains are called after pains.
- Your **breasts** may become quite uncomfortable and full during the early days of breastfeeding.
- If you have had a vaginal or forceps birth, your vagina and bottom area will feel **sore and swollen**. You may have small tears or an episiotomy. You may have swelling in the veins in the anal canal after giving birth. These are called hemorrhoids. They may be painful or itchy.
- Many women have some pain when they first pee (urinate) or have a bowel movement
- If you had a caesarean birth, you will feel pinching or burning from the **incision** in your lower stomach. You can also feel discomfort in **passing gas**. This may last a few days.

Helpful things you can do for pain and discomfort:

- **Sore and tired muscles and joint pain** - Try to get plenty of rest and sleep. Short walks help as well. Put a warm or cool pack on your muscles. Have a warm shower or bath. ***Come to the Postpartum Physiotherapy Class before you go home.***

- **After pains** – Pee every 2 to 3 hours. Put a warm or cool pack on your lower back. Take your pain medications every 4 hours for the first few days.
- **Tender Breasts and Nipples** – Put warm packs on your breasts before feeding and cool packs after. Wear a comfortable and supportive bra. Read the pamphlet in your information package called ***Breastfeeding*** to get more ideas.
- **Swollen and tender vagina and bottom** – Take your medications every four hours. Don't wait to be in pain. Use a warm sitz bath. Wrap a cool pack or ice pack in a towel and put it on your bottom. Tighten your bum muscles when you go to sit down. Sit on a U shaped cushion. Make one by rolling a towel or small blanket and making it into a U shape.
- **Hemorrhoids** – Use cool packs and Tucks® pads. Tucks can be bought at the drug store. Try not to become constipated.
- **Pain while peeing** – Drink plenty of water. Use your squirt (Peri) bottle when you pee.
- **Tailbone Pain** – Use your U-shaped cushion. Do not sit on hard surfaces for a long time.
- **Incision Pain** – Take your pain medications every four hours. Hold a small pillow on your incision with when you move. Get plenty of rest and sleep. Watch “After Your Birth: What you Can Do in the Early Days” on the Family Education Channel 68 to see what you can do to feel more comfortable. The ***Physiotherapy pamphlet*** in your information package also gives more ideas you can try.
- **Gas pains and constipation** – Drink plenty of water. Be active. Go for short walks. Eat meals regularly. Eat fruits, vegetables, whole wheat or grain bread and cereals.

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Talk to your doctor, midwife or nurse if:

- Doing these things does not help your pain.
- You are taking pain medications every 4 hours for longer than 5 days.
- You are having problems with moving and with daily activities longer than 5 days.

Reminder: Physiotherapy Comfort Class

is held Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10:00 am.
Please come.

You can also come to it for up to 6 weeks postpartum.

See the pamphlet in Welcome Envelope.

At BC Women's Hospital you can take certain medications on your own when you need them. Here are the medications that your nurse may give to you to take on your own while in hospital and when you go home.

These medications are considered to be safe to take while you are breastfeeding your baby.

Medicines that help with pain. These are also called analgesics.

Talk to your nurse about which medication to start with. Your nurse can also tell you how you can use two medications to get better pain relief.

Acetaminophen which is also called Tylenol®.

What does it do?

Helps with mild to moderate pain and brings down your temperature if you have a fever.

How much do I take?

- One or 2 tablets every four to six hours as you need it.

What do I need to do or be careful of when I take it?

- Know if you are taking tablets that have 325mg or 500mg in them. Your nurse may give you either of these. Ask your nurse if you do not know.

- Know how many tablets you take in 24 hours. Do not take more than 12 of the 325 mg tablets or 8 of the 500mg tablets in 24 hours.
- Know if you are taking any other medications which have acetaminophen in it. Make sure the total amount of all the acetaminophen you take is less than 4000 mg in 24 hours. If you do not know ask your nurse or when you go home your pharmacist, doctor or midwife.
- **Keep out of reach of children**

Ibuprofen which is also called Motrin® or Advil®.

What does it do?

Helps with mild to moderate pain, and swelling. It brings down your temperature if you have a fever. It is very helpful if you have after-pains.

How much do I take?

- One tablet every four hours as you need it.

What do I need to do or be careful of when I take it?

- Know how many tablets you take in 24 hours. Do not take more than 6 of the 400mg tablets or 2400 mg in 24 hours. Each tablet we give has **400 mg** in it.
- Do not take this medication if you are allergic to aspirin (ASA) or if you have stomach problems such as a peptic ulcer.
- Drink a glass of milk or eat some food when you take it. Ibuprofen may cause stomach upset and eating or drinking milk when you take it helps prevent this.
- *You may buy ibuprofen at the drugstore that has 200 mg in it. Do not take more than 12 of these tablets in 24 hours. If you do not know what kind it is ask the pharmacist.*
- Keep out of reach of children

Medicines that help you have a bowel movement (Laxatives)

Docusate which is also called Colace®.

What does it do?

Softens the stool or bowel movement and prevents constipation. You usually need to take it for one to two days before the bowel movements become soft.

Useful if you have hemorrhoids or are constipated.

How much do I take?

- One capsule 2 times a day.

What do I need to do or be careful of when I take it?

- Drink 6 to 8 cups of water every day.

Glycerin Rectal Suppositories

What does it do?

- Helps bowel movement come out. It usually works in 15 to 30 minutes.

How much do I take?

- Put 1 suppository into your anal opening. You usually do not need to use more than one suppository in 24 hours.

Mineral oil and magnesium hydroxide liquid which is also called Magnolax.

What does it do?

- Brings on a bowel movement. It usually starts to work in a few hours.

How much do I take?

- Drink 2 tablespoons or 30 milliliters once a day.

What do I need to do or be careful of when I take it?

- Morning is the best time of day to take it.

Anusol HC® Ointment

What does it do?

- Takes away the pain or itchiness from your hemorrhoids.

How much do I take?

- Put applicator tip gently into your anal opening and squeeze the ointment tube till a little ointment comes out.
- Use two times a day and after each bowel movement.
- You may also put a little ointment around your hemorrhoids.

Medicines that help your body recover from giving birth

Iron supplement which is also called Ferrous gluconate.

What does it do?

- Refills your iron supplies to build back your blood.

How much do I take?

- One pill 1 to 3 times each day. Your doctor, midwife or pharmacist will tell you how much to take.

What do I need to do or be careful of when I take it?

- Take with a full glass of water or juice. It is best taken on an empty stomach, but if it upsets your stomach then take it with food. Do **not** take it with milk, yogurt, cheese or any milk products.
- If you take antacids, calcium, or milk products take the iron one hour before or two hours after.
- It may cause constipation, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting. These usually go away over time.
- The iron may make your bowel movements dark green or black. This is not harmful.
- Call your doctor if your bowel movements become black **and** sticky with red streaks, or if you have stomach pains or cramping.
- Keep out of reach of children

Other Medications:

If you have questions or concerns about your medications ask your nurse to call the pharmacist to come and speak with you.

Remember, always keep your medications in a safe place, out of Reach of Children.

Please do not share your medications with other patients, family or friends. Your medications may be harmful to others.