

POSTPARTUM

PERINEAL (PERI) CARE

The perineal area consists of the vaginal opening where your baby exited as well as the surrounding tissue. Following the birth of your baby, this area and the vagina itself may be tender and sore. This tenderness may occur whether or not you had stitches to repair a tear or episiotomy.

Cleanliness and pain relief are the two most important items in the care of the perineal area following birth. Good peri care can help prevent infection as well as speed healing.

Cleanliness prevents infection

squeeze bottle



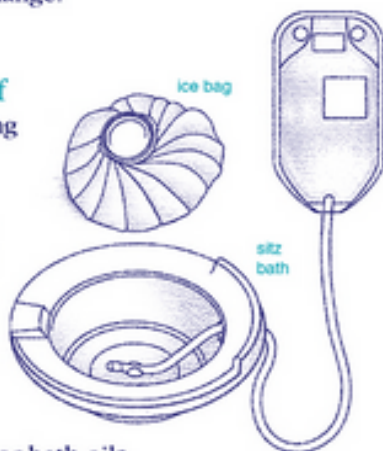
Wash the perineal area with gentle soap. In addition, do the following every time you use the toilet:

- Use a peri bottle or other plastic squeeze bottle to wash the area with warm water after urinating until lochia (postpartum vaginal discharge) stops, which usually is 4–6 weeks postpartum.
- Pat the perineal area dry from front to back to avoid introducing germs from the rectal area.
- Change the sanitary pad at least every 4–6 hours.
- Assess amount and color of lochia with each pad change.

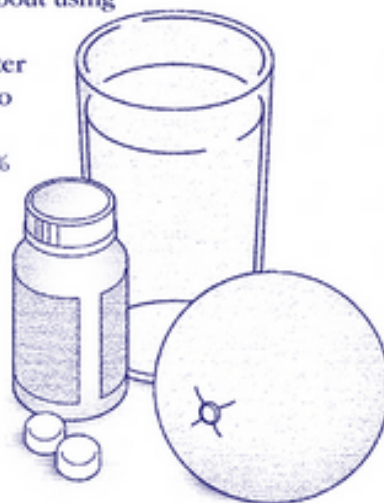
Pain and discomfort relief

For pain relief, use the following methods:

- Apply ice packs for the first 24 hours to reduce swelling.
- After the first 24 hours have passed, you can take a 20-minute sitz bath in warm water three times a day. You can also soak in 2–3 inches (5–8 cm) of water in a bathtub. Do not use bubble bath or bath oils.
- Let your perineum air-dry while you lie in bed.



- Avoid standing or sitting for long periods of time.
- Ask your healthcare professional about using acetaminophen (paracetamol) or ibuprofen as well as over-the-counter pain-relieving sprays or foams. Also ask about using a stool softener.
- Drink 6–8 glasses of water or 100% fruit juice daily, and eat fresh fruits and vegetables to prevent straining the peri area from constipation.
- Ask your healthcare professional to explain how to do Kegel exercises (special exercises to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles). These exercises can boost the blood flow to the area for increased healing.
- Pour warm water over the vaginal area to alleviate any burning experienced while urinating.



Warning signs

Immediately call your healthcare professional if you note any of the following:

- Very heavy bleeding that soaks a large sanitary pad every hour
- Bright red blood after day four
- A foul-smelling discharge—normal lochia should smell like a normal period
- Clots larger than the approximate size of a quarter (3 cm)
- A fever of 100.4 Fahrenheit (38 Celsius) or higher

Do not use tampons and vaginal douches or have sexual intercourse until after your 6-week postpartum appointment and your healthcare professional has said it is OK.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FROM YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL

The information contained in this tear pad is not intended to replace the advice of a healthcare professional.