



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

# ST. LUKE'S GENERAL HOSPITAL

## MATERNITY UNIT



# Congratulations on the birth of your baby.

This is a special time for you and your family. Getting used to life with your new baby can be challenging and exhausting. Your body is going through a lot of changes and this is a time to nurture both yourself and your baby.

This leaflet is designed to give you information and advice on caring for yourself in the weeks and months following the birth of your baby.

## REST

It is normal to feel very tired after having a baby.

- Rest whenever you can.
- Visiting hours in St Luke's General Hospital Maternity Unit: 2pm-4pm, 6.30pm-9pm. Quiet Time for mothers and babies 4pm-5pm.
- Sleep when your baby is sleeping.
- Take offers of help.

## HYGIENE

|  |   |
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| <b>Wash your hands regularly:</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> After changing your baby's nappy</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Before &amp; after:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Using the toilet.</li><li>➤ Changing your sanitary pad.</li></ul></li></ul>   |
| <b>Care of the Perineum</b><br>(Area between your vagina & back passage) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> If you had stitches, these take about four weeks to dissolve.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> If you did not have stitches, it is still important to keep the area clean.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Bath/shower at least once a day (using plain water).</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Change pads at least every 3-4 hours.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Always wipe from front to back, after using the toilet.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Always clean the area with water after using the toilet.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Dry yourself well after washing.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not use tampons as they can cause infection.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid constipation.</li></ul> |
| <b>Care of Caesarean Section wound</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Bath or shower at least once a day using plain water.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Dry the area well after washing.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Wear underwear that come up over your wound to avoid friction.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> You may have dissolvable stitches (do not need to be removed) or clips (usually removed after 5-7 days).</li></ul>  |
| <b>Watch for infection</b><br>(from your perineum/section wound)         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Bad smell, ooze from wound, pain, feeling feverish &amp; shivering<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Inform your doctor/midwife.</li></ul></li></ul>  |

## BLEEDING

Bleeding will initially be similar to a heavy period, but will gradually settle down and usually stops within 4-6 weeks after the birth.

**Inform your doctor or midwife if you suffer from:**

- Persistent heavy bleeding e.g. it soaks a sanitary pad in an hour or less.
- If you notice a bad smell from the blood.
- Have a sudden increase in bleeding or notice any clots.
- Have a tender abdomen.
- Feeling faint, dizzy and/or have palpitations or feverish.

## PAIN

- You may feel sore and uncomfortable for the first few days.
- Make sure that you take medication to relieve the pain. When in hospital, ask the midwife for medication.
- Your pain medication will work better if you take it early and regularly and do not let the pain build up.

## AVOIDING CONSTIPATION

- Remember the importance of a good diet in preventing constipation (see diet).
- Hold a clean sanitary pad against your stitches when going to the toilet. This helps supports your stitches and makes it easier to go!
- If constipation persists, talk to your pharmacist.
- If you have any loss of control inform your midwife or doctor.
- Haemorrhoids (piles): avoid constipation. See your pharmacist or doctor if causing concern.

## PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

- See physiotherapists' leaflet
- Inform your midwife or doctor if you have any loss of control, difficulty passing urine.

## BREASTS

During the first few days following the birth, your breasts will change as they prepare for feeding. This happens whether or not you intend to breastfeed your baby.

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| <b>Breastfeeding</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Your midwife will assist you &amp; you will be provided with written information.</li><li>❑ Use breastfeeding support groups in the community (ask our midwife or public health nurse for information).</li></ul> |
| <b>Not Breastfeeding</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Avoid stimulation of your breasts e.g. stand with your back to the shower.</li><li>❑ Wear a good bra.</li><li>❑ If our breasts feel hot &amp; full, use cool packs in your bra.</li></ul>                         |
| <b>Breast Check</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Check your breasts monthly during the week after your period for lumps or changes. See your doctor if you have any concerns.</li></ul>  |

## LEGS

Swelling in your feet and hands will go down. Keep your legs elevated when you are seated.

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| <b>Watch for signs of blood clot</b> | <p>Pain, redness or swelling in either calf, difficulty weight bearing on either leg.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Shortness of breath or chest pain.</li><li>❑ See your doctor immediately if you have concerns.</li></ul> |
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## DIET

Your diet should be nourishing and well balanced.

- ❑ Protein is needed for healing and for general good health. Protein rich foods include eggs, red meat, chicken, milk, cheese, beans and lentils.
- ❑ Fibre helps prevent constipation. Fruit, vegetables, brown bread and prune juice are high in fibre.

- ❑ Iron and vitamins are important to help prevent/treat anaemia. Eat plenty of green vegetables, red meat, dried fruits, beans and lentils. Take iron tablets as advised by your midwife/doctor. Orange juice increases your body's absorption of iron. Avoid drinking tea as this decreases your body's absorption of iron.
- ❑ Drink at least two litres of water per day.

## BABY BLUES/POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

| Baby Blues  | Postnatal depression  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Normal in the first two weeks following the birth</li> </ul> <p><b>SYMPTOMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Crying spells.</li> <li>❑ Increased vulnerability, loneliness, irritability.</li> <li>❑ Weariness.</li> </ul> <p><b>ADVICE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Take gentle exercise.</li> <li>❑ Take time to rest.</li> <li>❑ Use offers of help.</li> <li>❑ Use social supports (mother and baby groups in the community).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Affects one in seven new mothers.</li> <li>❑ Symptoms may start as baby blues and then get worse, or they may take time to develop.</li> <li>❑ It may be most obvious when your baby is 4-6 months old.</li> </ul> <p><b>SYMPTOMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Difficulty coping.</li> <li>❑ Anxiety.</li> <li>❑ Feelings of sadness, inadequacy or worthlessness.</li> <li>❑ Loss of appetite.</li> <li>❑ Low self esteem.</li> <li>❑ Constant low mood or crying.</li> </ul> <p><b>ADVICE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Talk to your partner/family and your doctor</li> <li>❑ Contact support groups e.g. Post Natal Depression Ireland- <a href="http://www.pnd.ie">www.pnd.ie</a> or 021-4923162.</li> </ul> |

## CONTRACEPTION

- ❑ You can get pregnant very quickly after having a baby; you may not even have a period.
- ❑ Read the contraception information booklet and talk to your midwife or doctor.

## SMOKING

- ❑ Do not smoke/let anyone smoke around your baby.
- ❑ With a new baby, now is a good time to stop smoking.
- ❑ For help and advice contact the national smokers quit line: 1850201203

## APPOINTMENTS

1. Six week check: with your GP or in certain circumstances in the hospital.
2. Cervical smear test
  - ❑ A simple procedure which is used to detect pre-cancerous cells.
  - ❑ Free to all women aged between 25 and 60 (must register with the National Cervical Screening Programme).
  - ❑ According to the National Cervical Screening Programme, you only require a smear postnatally if you are due one i.e. once every three years (aged 25-44) and every five years (aged 45-60), or if you need one to follow up on a previous abnormal smear.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

| Organisation                    | Phone Number | Website  |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Parentline                      | 1890927277   | <a href="http://www.parentline.ie">www.parentline.ie</a>                       |
| HSE Breastfeeding support       | 1850241850   | <a href="http://www.breastfeeding.ie">www.breastfeeding.ie</a>                 |
| Cuidiu – Irish Childbirth Trust | See website  | <a href="http://www.cuidiu-ict.ie">www.cuidiu-ict.ie</a>                       |
| La Leche League of Ireland      | See website  | <a href="http://www.lalecheleagueireland.com">www.lalecheleagueireland.com</a> |
| St. Luke's General Hospital     | 0567785000   | <a href="http://www.HSE.ie/lukeskilkenny">www.HSE.ie/lukeskilkenny</a>         |
| Maternity ward (St. Luke's)     | 0567785252   |  |



*Adapted from NICE 2014*

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