

# The woman's body after birth

Expected changes in the first two weeks after birth

## Breastfeeding

If you are breastfeeding, it is normal that your nipples will feel sore for the first few days after giving birth. If you experience that this sensation lasts for more than a couple of minutes or increases during breastfeeding, it is a good idea to contact a healthcare professional who can observe your baby's sucking technique. A poor sucking technique can cause soreness and wounds on the nipples. Many women experience tense breasts when starting to breastfeed. This can often be relieved by warming the breasts, feeding your baby more frequently, and regularly changing the breastfeeding position. Massage of the breasts may also help. The pain usually goes away during the first week of breastfeeding, once a routine has been established.

## Birth tears and stitches

If you experienced rupture during birth, it is normal to have swelling, soreness and redness around the area. It can sting while urinating. It is important to keep the area clean and change sanitary towels regularly, making sure to wash the area with lukewarm water. Normally it should take around 3 days for the swelling and redness to reduce. You can relieve the symptoms by placing a cold compress on the area for 15-20 minutes at a time.

## Post-birth contractions

After birth the uterus will start to contract and move itself back into normal position. These contractions also help to reduce the bleeding from the uterus. Due to these contractions, some women experience more blood on their sanitary towels, as blood is squeezed out of the uterus. Some women do not experience post-birth contractions at all. However other women, usually those who have already had multiple births, feel the contractions stronger and sometimes quite painful. Breastfeeding stimulates contractions of the uterus, and therefore the post-birth contractions can feel stronger while breastfeeding. The contractions can be expected to continue for the first couple of days after birth. You can relieve them with heat or with the use of painkillers such as Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen.

## Bleeding

In the first days after birth, you can expect to bleed as if it were a heavy period. After some days this should reduce with the blood beginning to appear browner. You may experience small clots of blood if you move after lying still for some time. The bleeding should continue to reduce, and should stop completely after 1-2 weeks. After this brown or yellowish discharge can be expected. This will reduce over the following 4-8 weeks.

## Hemorrhoids

Some women get hemorrhoids in the process of pregnancy and birth. A hemorrhoid is a pouch of blood vessels that appears outside the rectum. These can sting, itch and be painful. Aim to drink plenty of fluids and eat fiber-rich foods such as fruit, vegetables and whole-grain products. In most cases hemorrhoids tend to go away themselves, however if they are particularly bothering you, there are treatment options available such as ointment and suppositories. You may contact your own doctor about the treatment if you experience problems.

## Parent wellbeing

It is normal to react to big events in life, such as becoming a parent. Many parents experience this as a happy occasion, however at the same time it can be overwhelming to adapt to this big change. More than half of all mothers experience feeling low, sad or irritable in the first week after giving birth, due to the big hormonal changes taking place in the body. This feeling can also be induced from lack of sleep, stress or fatigue from giving birth. Men can also experience psychological reactions after birth, adjusting to the new role of being a father.

Help each other to rest and be aware of how the other is feeling. Help to create yourselves the best conditions for one-another. For example rest while the baby is sleeping, create peace by limiting the number of visitors and reduce the activities away for home.

## Pelvic floor exercise

There are many good reasons to exercise the pelvic floor muscles, just a couple of days after giving birth. Training the muscles can help with bladder control, passing stool and gas, as well as having better sexual enjoyment in the longer-term for both you and your partner. Training of the pelvic floor can also prevent bladder and uterus prolapse later in life. You can find further instructions on our app: Mit Sygehus - Nybagte forældre.

## Urination

The first days after giving birth it can be difficult to urinate. The area can be swollen, and many do not feel the sensation of needing to urinate. It is important that you empty your bladder every 3-4 hours as the uterus is moving itself back into position. This will reduce the risk of urination problems later in life.

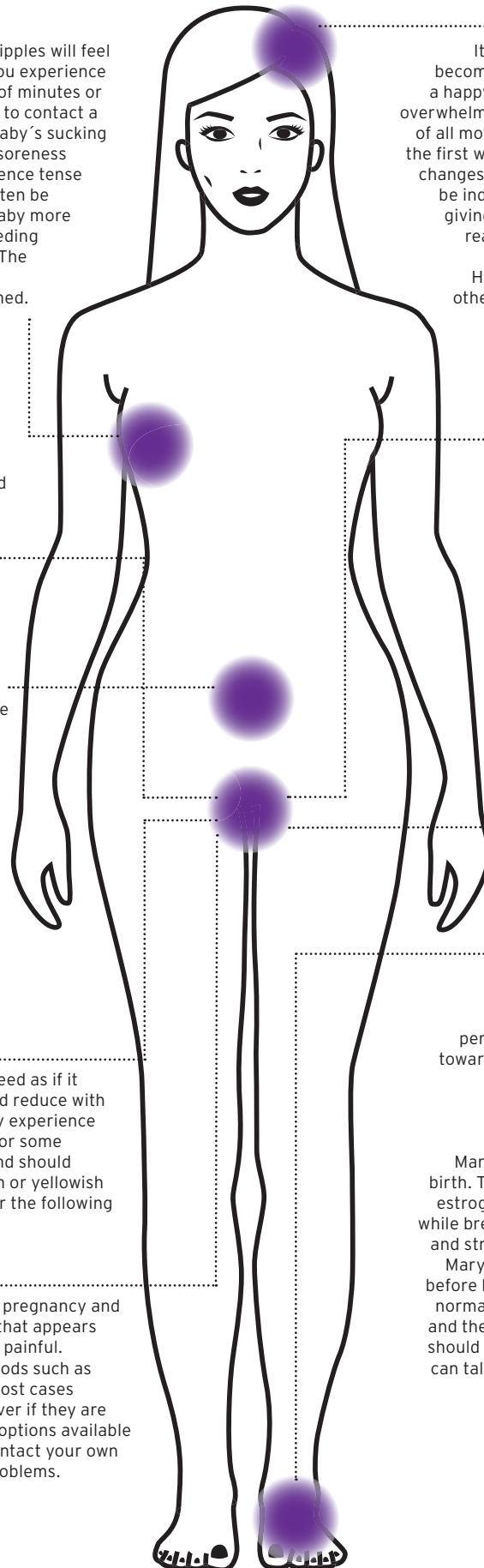
## Swelling of the feet

When mothers start breastfeeding, many experience excess fluid in the feet. This can be helped by raising the feet up often. In addition performing foot exercises such as flexing the feet towards the sky and back into a relaxed position can help with the drainage of excess fluid.

## Sex and contraception

Many women experience a reduced sex drive after birth. This is due to a lack of the female sex hormone, estrogen. Estrogen naturally reduces after birth and while breastfeeding. Changes in the body, fatigue, pain and stress can also contribute to a reduced sex drive.

Many couples wait for at least 6-8 weeks after birth before having sex, but there is a large variation within normal. Remember that you can ovulate at this time, and therefore have the potential to get pregnant. You should therefore use a condom after giving birth. You can talk with your own doctor about contraception at your 8-week examination.



# If you feel that your circumstances demand that you should seek some advice and instruction

## Breastfeeding

If you start to experience a blushing or heat in the breast area or if you have fever or influenza-like symptoms, this could be a sign of a breast infection. In this case, contact the Outpatient Clinic (Barselsklinikken) or your own doctor.

## Tears & Stretching

If you experience that the swelling in your stitches in the perineal area is getting worse and becoming increasingly red, sore and swollen, then you should contact the Outpatient Clinic (Barselsklinikken) or your own doctor.

## Bleeding

If you begin to bleed heavily again after the bleeding has otherwise stopped or find that there are multiple or large clots of blood, and that the bleeding is getting heavier rather than decreasing, you should contact the Outpatient Clinic (Barselsklinikken) or your own doctor. If you have a fever, stomach pain, cold-shivers, or bad smelling bleeding, and a rectal temperature above 38° you should also contact the Outpatient Clinic (Barselsklinikken) or your own doctor.

## Urination

If you are unable to urinate or feel a sensation of being unable to completely emptying your bladder, you should contact the Outpatient Clinic (Barselsklinikken) or your own doctor.

## Pelvic floor muscles

If you experience problems with urination or stool incontinence you should contact your own doctor.

## Parental wellbeing

Some mothers and fathers will experience post-natal depression. The symptoms can be tiredness, reduced appetite, sleeping difficulties, memory problems, loss of concentration, restlessness, anxiety or thinking that life is just no longer worth-while. These can be hard feelings to bear, especially when a new baby has just arrived. If you experience that either you or your partner's personality has changed, and this has lasted longer than just the first weeks, then talk with your health visitor (sundhedsplejerske) or your own doctor about it.

## Contact

The first 7 days after discharge

**65 41 13 75**

Outpatient Clinic  
Barselsklinikken

Gynækologisk Obstetrisk Afdeling D

