

## Advice for Mothers following the birth of their baby

*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.***

### **DIET**

Nutrient	Benefits	Food Types
Protein	Helps healing	Eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, red meat, chicken, beans & lentils
Fibre	Prevents constipation	Fruit & vegetables, brown bread, prune juice
Vitamins & Iron	Prevent/treat anaemia  Orange juice increases your body's absorption of iron  Tea decreases your body's absorption of iron	Green vegetables, red meat, dried fruits, beans & lentils  Take iron tablets if advised by your midwife or doctor
Water	Drink at least 2 litres (10 glasses) of water per day	

### **REST**

- Rest whenever you can
- Sleep when your baby is sleeping
- Take offers of help

### **HYGIENE**

- **Wash your hands regularly** especially after changing your baby's nappy, going to the toilet, and after changing your sanitary pads.
- **Keep your stiches clean:** Bath/shower at least once a day (using plain water). Change pads at least every 3-4 hours
- **Watch for infection:** Bad smell, pain, feeling feverish and shivering? Inform your doctor or midwife

## **URINE**

- To relieve stinging: Drink at least 2 litres of water per day to make urine more dilute
- Do your pelvic floor exercises; they help prevent leakage of urine
- Inform your midwife or doctor if you have any loss of control, difficulty passing urine or persistent stinging

## **BOWEL MOVEMENTS**

- Remember the importance of a good diet in preventing constipation (see diet)
- Hold a clean sanitary towel against your stiches when going to the toilet. This helps support your stiches 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 concerns

## **PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES**

- Do them everyday
- They help prevent incontinence/leakage

## **BLEEDING**

- Duration of bleeding varies for every woman
- Bleeding may last for 2-3 weeks
- Will gradually start to ease off

- See your doctor if you suffer from:
  - Persistent heavy bleeding
  - Have a sudden increase in bleeding
  - Have a tender abdomen
  - Feeling faint, dizzy and/or have palpitations

## **BREASTS**

<b>Breastfeeding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your midwife will give you individual advice</li> <li>• Go to breastfeeding class while you are in hospital (details in breastfeeding leaflet)</li> <li>• Read the breastfeeding leaflet</li> <li>• Use breastfeeding support groups in the community (ask your public health nurse or community midwife for information)</li> <li>• Talk to your public health nurse or community midwife</li> </ul>
<b>Not breastfeeding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to stop milk production</li> <li>• Avoid stimulation of your breasts e.g. stand with your back to shower</li> <li>• Wear a good bra</li> <li>• If your breasts feel hot and full, use cool packs or cold green cabbage leaves in your bra (cool cabbage leaves by placing in fridge for 2 hours)</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</li> <li>• See your doctor if you have any concerns</li> </ul>

## **LEGS**

<b>Swollen feet and ankles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swelling will go down. Keep your legs elevated when you are seated</li> </ul>
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<b>Watch for signs of blood clot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pain, redness or swelling in either calf</li><li>• Shortness of breath or chest pain</li><li>• See your doctor immediately if you have any concerns</li></ul>
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## **BABY BLUES / POSTNATAL DEPRESSION**

<b>Baby blues</b>	<b>Postnatal depression</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Normal In first 2 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>Causes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of sleep</li><li>• Hormonal changes</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 &amp; baby groups in the community)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Affects 1 in 7 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 you partner and your doctor</li><li>• Contact support organisations e.g.</li><li>• Post Natal Depression Ireland - <a href="http://www.pnd.ie">www.pnd.ie</a> or</li><li>• 021 4923162</li></ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Postnatal depression is very treatable when recognised early</b></p>

## **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

## **APPOINTMENTS**

1. **Six week check:** with your GP or in certain circumstances in the hospital
2. **Cervical smear test**
  - a. A simple procedure which is used to detect pre-cancerous cells (3 months after giving birth)
  - b. Free to all women aged between 25 and 60
  - c. 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 5 years (aged 45 -60), or if you need one to follow up on a previous abnormal smear.

## **USEFUL CONTACTS**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Phone number</b>	<b>Website</b>
Cuidiu - Irish Childbirth Trust	01 8724501	<a href="http://www.cuidiu-ict.ie">www.cuidiu-ict.ie</a>
Parentline	1890 927277	<a href="http://www.parentline.ie">www.parentline.ie</a>
HSE breast feeding support	See website	<a href="http://www.breastfeeding.ie">www.breastfeeding.ie</a>

**IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS, SEE YOUR MIDWIFE, GP OR PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE.**

**IN AN EMERGENCY, CONTACT/ATTEND THE EMERGENCY ROOM IN THE COOMBE.**

