

Going home after giving birth

Information for parents



Going home and in-home postpartum midwife services

When mother and baby are discharged from hospital to home after birth, an in-home postpartum midwife will provide care for the family for a few days. It is important to call the midwife as soon as you come home to make an appointment for the first home visit. If questions or problems arise, please call your in-home postpartum midwife.

If you will not receive in-home postpartum care, a midwife at the hospital will provide you with information about the first days/weeks after birth, including information about breastfeeding and taking care of your newborn.

The newborn examination

A pediatrician examines all newborns on their first day of life, and then again 3-6 days after birth. If you are discharged from the hospital before the second examination, an appointment will be made for your baby at the Children's hospital (Barnaspítali Hringinsins).

A hearing test will be offered either at the Landspítali postpartum ward or during the newborn examination at the Children's hospital. If it is not possible to perform the hearing test, you can make an appointment at The National Hearing and Speech Institute of Iceland (Heyrnar- og talmeinstöð Íslands). The phone number is 581 3855.

General recommendations

It is important to take good care of yourself after you arrive in home after birth and to allow for time for your family to adjust to changes in the family dynamic. To maximize rest, try to rest when your baby is resting. To minimize infections, it is recommended to maintain regular hygiene, as well as sanitizing your hands before and after using the bathroom and when changing menstrual pads.

Pain after childbirth

It is normal to experience some discomfort for the first two to three weeks after birth. If pain medication is needed, paracetamol and ibuprofen is recommended. The usual dose for adults is one or two paracetamol 500 mg tablets every six hours. Similarly, you may take 400 mg ibuprofen every six hours. Only small amounts of paracetamol and ibuprofen pass through to your breastmilk and it is therefore unlikely to harm your baby. As time passes, your pain will be less and you will therefore need less pain medication.

Breastfeeding

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Icelandic Directorate of Health recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the baby's first six months of life to support their growth and development. After the first six months, the baby should also receive nutritious food and continue breastfeeding for up to two years of age, or as long as desired by the mother and baby. There are significant health benefits associated with breastfeeding and breastmilk contains antibodies which can provide protection against infections.

- Usually the baby will breastfeed shortly after birth and then rest for a few hours. It varies how often babies will go to the breast in the first 24 hours, but they are all born with a reserve of fluid and sugar which will sustain them for the first 48 hours.
- The colostrum, which is the first milk made by the mother, is enough for most babies until milk production starts on day 2-5.
- To stimulate milk production, it is important to offer the breast to the baby every 2-3 hours for the first days and weeks, and more frequently if the baby seems hungry.
- It is normal to experience tender nipples for about 4-7 days after birth, but it is not normal to have open sores. To prevent sores, it is recommended to take good care when positioning the baby on the breast. If you experience sores, please contact your midwife for recommendations and support.
- Warm compresses on the nipples before and after breastfeeding can help to manage pain.

Engorgement

Some women will experience engorgement. This normal physiological change may happen in the breasts when milk production peaks around day 2-4 after birth. The breasts will become larger, tender and warm to the touch, the areola may feel hard and the nipple may flatten.

- Engorgement is the result of increased supply of blood and fluid to the breast tissue causing swelling and compression on milk ducts. To minimize engorgement, it is recommended to breastfeed frequently (8-12 times in each 24-hour period) as well as applying gentle massage to the breast while breastfeeding.
- Sometimes it may be beneficial to hand express milk before breastfeeding the baby. See instructions on hand-expressing here: <http://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/hand-expressing-milk.html>.
- You may take pain medication as well as use cold compresses after breastfeeding to reduce swelling.

Plugged ducts

Symptoms of plugged ducts may include hot, swollen or reddened breasts and/or a hard lump felt in the breast. Reasons for a plugged duct may include fatigue and stress, changes in breastfeeding pattern, irregular feedings, cold weather or tight clothing. You may prevent plugged ducts by feeding your baby regularly and frequently with a correct latch and position. Avoid tight clothing and stressful situations.

If symptoms worsen or the mother experiences a fever over 38 °C and flu-like symptoms with a sudden onset, it is important to seek medical attention at your local healthcare clinic (Heilsugæslan) or Læknavaktin Medical Center (tel. 1770).

Management of plugged ducts

- Frequent breastfeeding in various breastfeeding positions.
- A warm compress and gentle massage before feeding your baby.
- Gently massage the hard lump in the direction of the nipple while the baby is breastfeeding.
- Use a cold compress for 5-15 minutes after breastfeeding your baby.
- Pump or hand-express if the baby is unable to breastfeed.
- If this is done at each feeding, the plugged duct will disappear in 2-4 day.

Lactation consultants

If needed, you have a right to three visits from a lactation consultant in the first six months after birth. Your in-home postpartum midwife will assist you in contacting a lactation consultant or you can contact one yourself. See the following website for further information: <http://www.ljosmaedrafelag.is/thjonusta/brjostagjafaradgjof>

Bottle feeding

Sometimes breastfeeding is not possible. There are a few options available for formula feeding. It is important to wash the bottle with water and soap after each use. Once a day, it is recommended to put the bottles in a bowl, pour boiling water over and let stand for ten minutes.

Nutrition

A well-balanced diet and drinking plenty of water is important to support healthy digestion after birth. A diet high in fiber and protein is recommended.

Exercise

Exercise is important as it will support healthy digestion and minimize the risk of blood clots. Strenuous exercise should be avoided for the first 4-6 weeks after giving birth. It is important to listen to your body and adjust exercise accordingly. It is recommended to start with short walks and then to increase your exercise as you build up strength.

Baby-blues and postpartum depression

Most new mothers will experience mood swings for the first 1-2 weeks after birth, sometimes called baby-blues. This is normal and is caused by a sudden change in hormones after delivery, combined with stress, isolation, sleep deprivation and fatigue. You might feel tearful, overwhelmed and emotionally fragile.

If your symptoms don't go away after a few weeks or get worse, you may be suffering from postpartum depression. Symptoms may include changes in appetite, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, feelings of guilt or worthlessness. Please contact a healthcare provider at your local healthcare center if you experience these symptoms. Partners may also feel symptoms of depression as they adjust to parenting.

After a cesarean section

- It is not recommended to lift anything heavier than your baby for six weeks after birth.
- You will be provided with strong pain medication as you leave the hospital. You should take this medication every 12 hours, as well as paracetamol and ibufen (see information above). It is important to take paracetamol and ibufen for the first few days after an operation.
- Many women are recommended by an obstetrician at the hospital to take injectable medication to prevent blood clots. Treatment varies and can last for 10 days or 6 weeks. If this applies to you, you will receive information on how to inject yourself.
- Your in-home postpartum midwife will remove staples from the cesarean section wound about 5-6 days after the operation. Sutures will not be removed, they will dissolve on their own. If you will not receive in-home postpartum care, an appointment will be made for you at the Landspítali Women's clinic or your local healthcare center for staples removal.

Your newborn baby

Hygiene

It is important to keep the baby's environment clean.

- All guests should wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer when they visit your newborn baby.
- The newborn's skin is clean and therefore it is not necessary to bathe the baby for the first days after birth. However, it is recommended to wash the baby's hands at least daily.
- When giving the baby a bath, the bathwater should be between 37,0-37,5 °C. It is important to have everything at hand when bathing or changing a diaper as you may never leave the baby unattended.
- Keep the umbilical cord stump clean and dry by cleaning it once a day with a wet cotton swab. The umbilical cord stump will fall off about ten days after birth. If there is redness around the umbilicus, please contact your in-home postpartum midwife or the local healthcare center.
- Sneezing is normal for newborns and does not indicate a cold in the first few days after birth. This is the baby's way of cleaning the nose. If a stuffy nose affects the baby's breathing while breastfeeding, you may use a saline solution from the pharmacy to help the baby clean out its nose.

Stool and urination

It is normal for a newborn to wet diapers once a day for the first days. The baby should have more wet diapers as they baby is receiving more milk. At 4-6 days of age, the baby should wet 4-6 diapers each day.

You may notice orange colored minerals from the kidneys in the diaper for the first couple of days. You may also notice blood or mucous in the diaper of your newborn baby girl. Both are normal.

For the first few days, the baby will have dark stool called meconium. The amount and frequency of soiled diapers will vary depending on how often the baby goes to the breast. Colostrum is the first milk that the mother will make and contains nutrients which will stimulate the bowels. With time, the stool will become lighter in color. Normal breastfeeding stool is yellow and grainy.

Digestive discomfort

It is common for newborn babies to experience digestive discomfort for the first 1-2 days after birth as their digestion is getting started. They might also have swallowed mucous or amniotic fluid during the birth, which might make them gag or spit up. During this time, they might not be as interested in sucking. If the baby's vomit is green, a pediatrician should evaluate your baby. Your baby might vomit blood if the nipple has a bleeding sore, but this is harmless for your baby.

Using a pacifier

When breastfeeding is well established and the baby is gaining weight, you may decide to offer your baby a pacifier. The pacifier should be washed once daily by placing the pacifier in a bowl, pour boiling water over the pacifier and let stand for at least ten minutes.

Well-baby care

Please contact your local healthcare center (heilsugæslan) when you get home from the hospital. They will provide you with information about well-baby check-ups.

For information

Birth certificates and copies of maternity care records

Birth certificates can be ordered at Registers Iceland (Þjóðskrá) on their website: www.skra.is under "Order a certificate".

You can request a copy of your maternity care records here: www.landspitali.is/um-landspitala/hafdu-samband/beidni-um-upplýsingar-ur-sjukraskra-maedraskra/

Difficult birth experience

Please contact a midwife at your local healthcare clinic (heilsugæslan) if you need to discuss your birth experience. In some instances, the midwife at the healthcare clinic will refer you to Lend me an ear (Ljáðu mér eyra) at Landspítali.

Feedback about our services

If you have feedback about our services, please visit www.landspitali.is and provide feedback under "Hafa samband".

Where to seek assistance if you experience problems?

If your baby is ill or the mother experiences complications such as increased bleeding, fever, gastric pain, foul smelling vaginal discharge, problem with urination or other unusual symptoms, please seek assistance.

Problems within the first two weeks after birth

- Your in-home postpartum midwife will make references to healthcare professionals, as needed.
- If you have not received in-home postpartum care, you can contact Landspítali tel. 543 1000 and ask to speak to the Women's Emergency Department (bráðabjónusta kvennadeilda) or the Prenatal and Postpartum Ward (meðgöngu og sængurlegudeild 22A).
- **Call 112 day or night for all emergencies.**

Problems after two weeks

Contact:

- Your local healthcare center (Heilsugæslan) from 08:00-16:00.
- Medical services (Læknavakt) in the evening after 16:00 and during weekends (tel. 1770). You will be referred elsewhere if needed.

If you live outside the Reykjavik capital area, please contact a doctor or midwife at your local healthcare center or hospital.

If your baby is sick

Contact the emergency services at the Children's hospital if your baby:

- Starts breathing fast (more than 60 times per minute).
- Has green vomit.
- Has a fever over 38°C.
- Has unusual behavior or is not interested in feeding.

If your baby is older than 12 weeks contact the local healthcare clinic or the Pediatric Services (Barnalæknaþjónustan; tel. 563 1010). After office hours, please contact Læknavaktin (tel. 1770).

For emergencies or accidents please call the emergency number 112.

Please note that the hospital will not be responsible for money or other valuables such as telephones, computers etc. that patients or their close family members bring with them.

We draw your attention to the following: The staff and students of the hospital are bound by confidentiality and may not discuss the affairs of patients in the ward. We want to ask you and your family members to please not discuss what you may witness to or hear about other patients.

Landspítali is a university hospital and therefore students may take part in your care during your stay at Landspítali. Students are at all times under the supervision of their supervisors and the medical staff is responsible for your care.