

# POSTNATAL CARE AND SUPPORT GUIDE

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR POST-PREGNANCY BODY

### Physical Changes:

- You may experience body changes such as stretched skin, hair loss, and changes in weight. Other symptoms women experience include urinary leakage or a heavy sensation down below. If these do not improve with self-help please speak to your GP.

### Recovery Tips:

- Nutrition: Ensure you're well hydrated, and eat a varied and balanced diet, including food rich in iron and protein to aid recovery.
- Exercise: Begin with breathing exercises and pelvic floor exercises to strengthen your deep abdominal muscles and pelvic floor. Get out walking when you feel able and gradually build up how much you do.

### Further Information:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/support-and-services/your-post-pregnancy-body/>
- <https://publicdocuments.sth.nhs.uk/pil1499.pdf>

## MENTAL HEALTH AFTER CHILDBIRTH

### Common Feelings:

- Emotions can range from happiness to a feeling of overwhelm or sadness. Postpartum depression can manifest as severe sadness, anxiety, or exhaustion that interferes with daily tasks.

### Support Available:

- Counselling or support groups can be beneficial, and medications may be prescribed as needed. Please speak to your GP, midwife or health visitor if you're struggling with your mental health.

### Further Information:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/support-and-services/feeling-depressed-after-childbirth/>
- <https://lightpeersupport.org.uk>

## SEX AND CONTRACEPTION AFTER BIRTH

### When to Resume:

- There are no rules about when to start having sex again. Physical recovery varies and emotional readiness is important. Discomfort during sex is common initially due to hormonal changes and healing, so don't rush or feel pressured into it. You may find it helpful to use lubrication and take it gently.

### Contraception:

- You can get pregnant as early as 3 weeks after giving birth, however your body needs time to recover so we recommend you use contraception.
- Options include condoms, progesterone-only pill, combined pill, implant, intrauterine device and others. Please speak to your midwife or GP to help decide which option is best for you.

### Further Information:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/support-and-services/sex-and-contraception-after-birth/>

## VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENTATION

### Why It's Important:

- Vitamin D is needed for strong bones, teeth and muscles. Deficiency can lead to bone deformities in babies and bone pain in adults.

### Recommendation:

- All breastfed babies, and formula-fed babies having less than 500ml of formula a day, should receive 8.5 to 10 micrograms of vitamin D daily.
- Pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers should take 10 micrograms of vitamin D daily.

### Further Information:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/>

## CHILDHOOD VACCINATIONS

### Why It's Important:

- Having your baby vaccinated helps to protect them against diseases such as measles, mumps, and whooping cough.

### After Vaccination:

- The injection site can be sore and red for 2-3 days. Some children feel irritable, unwell or develop a fever.
- It is recommended that you give liquid paracetamol after the MenB vaccine to reduce the risk of fever.
- If the child develops a high temperature keep them hydrated, give liquid paracetamol, and remove excess layers of clothing.

### Further Information:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/vaccination-tips-for-parents/>