

## Your Body After Pregnancy

### Discomforts



#### KEY TAKEAWAY

Talk with your health care provider if your discomfort is severe or long lasting, or if you need pain medication. There's no need to be embarrassed. These symptoms are common, and they **can** be treated.

### Cramps

Your uterus will continue to contract for about a week. Cramps will be strongest in the first few days, especially while breastfeeding. If this isn't your first baby, your cramps may be stronger.

### Hemorrhoids

Pregnancy and pushing can cause veins to bulge around your anus. They may itch, bleed or hurt, but usually go away in a few weeks. Try not to stand or sit for long periods, eat lots of fibre and drink water, and soak in a warm bath.

### Pelvic girdle pain

Back, hip and pubic pain is common during pregnancy. It usually goes away after the baby is born. If it continues, physiotherapy can help. Talk with your health care provider.

### Separation of stomach muscles

If you notice a bulging around your middle, your stomach muscles may have separated, like a zipper opening under stress. Most small gaps will heal themselves. Don't do sit-ups or twist until you're healed. See your health care provider if you have a large gap or a very floppy, bulging belly.

### Vaginal bleeding

You'll have "flow" for 2 to 6 weeks. For a few days, it will be dark red with clots about the size of a loonie. It shouldn't soak more than 1 maxi-pad every 2 hours. Then it will slow down and change colour. If it increases or smells bad, call your health care provider. And use pads, not tampons, until you're healed.

### Vaginal discomfort or pain

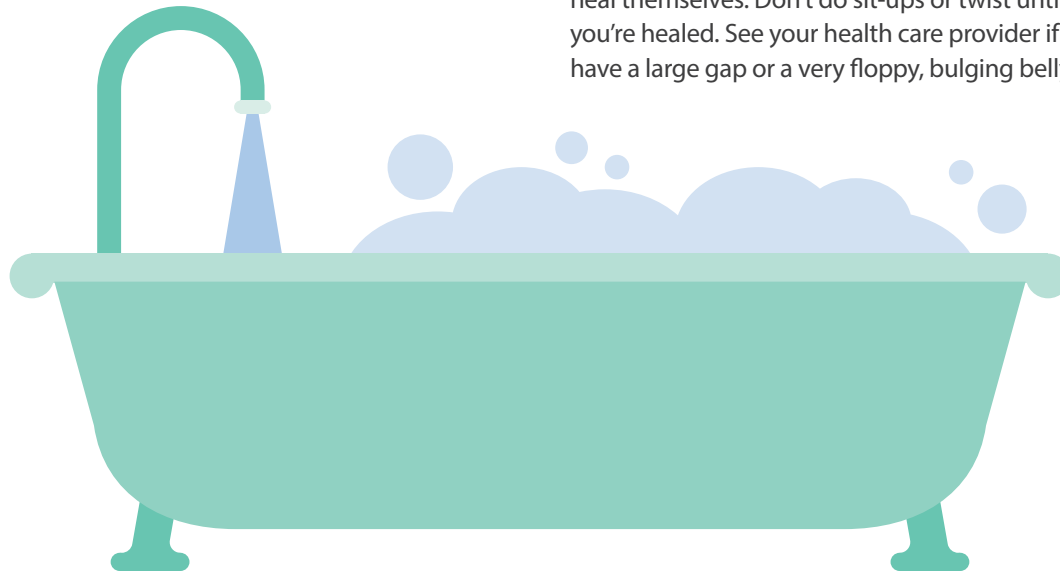
You may be bruised, swollen, or sore from stitches. Pour warm water over your perineum (the area between your legs) or sit in a warm bath to keep clean. For pain relief, try ice in a towel, sit on a cushion or talk with your doctor about pain medication. Do Kegel exercises (see [Taking Care of Yourself](#)). If, after you've healed, you still have pain when having sex or putting in a tampon, talk with your health care provider.

### Vaginal prolapse

Sometimes the organs in the lower body can bulge into the vagina. You may:

- feel a pressure between your legs, like something is falling out
- have pain in your lower back or belly
- have less feeling during sex
- have to pee more, have leaks or have trouble peeing
- be unable to poop

Vaginal prolapse is treatable. Use Kegel exercises (see [Taking Care of Yourself](#)) to strengthen your muscles, and talk with your health care provider.





## SEEK CARE

See your health care provider or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 right away if:

- your “flow” increases or smells bad
- you have heavy bleeding that soaks through a pad each hour for 2 hours or more
- you have bloody discharge for more than 6 weeks
- you pass blood clots larger than a golf ball over several hours
- you have headaches, changes in your vision, or abdominal pain
- you feel flu-ish or have an unexplained fever over 38°C (100°F)
- your stitches open or get infected
- the area around your caesarean is swollen, red and painful
- the calf of your leg is red and painful
- you have a sore, red area on your breast that doesn’t go away after regular breastfeeding
- you have to pee often, and it hurts
- you can’t poop, even though you’re drinking plenty of fluids, being active and using a stool softener

## Body Functions and Routines



### DID YOU KNOW

Over time, you’ll be able to return to your pre-pregnancy weight. Rather than dieting, focus on eating well and being active. Breastfeeding will help, too, especially once your baby is 6 months and older.

### Menstrual period

Your period may not start while you’re breastfeeding your baby. If you don’t breastfeed, your period will usually return a month or 2 after the birth.

Remember, though, that it’s possible to get pregnant again before your period returns. See [Family Planning](#) for information on birth control options.



### Peeing

You may find it hard to tell when you need to go, so pee regularly. You may also find it hard to start peeing, or it may sting. Pour warm water over the area or pee in the shower or bath. Your pee may leak, especially when you cough, sneeze, laugh, exercise or have to go badly. Try Kegels (see [Taking Care of Yourself](#)) and if your issues last longer than 6 to 8 weeks, talk with your health care provider.

### Bowel movements (pooping)

Drink lots of water, eat high-fibre foods, and you’ll probably poop within 2 or 3 days after the birth. Put your feet on a stool while you’re on the toilet. If you have stitches, put a cool, wet pad against the area when you poop for the first time. If you can’t go, try a stool softener (available without a prescription), but use it for a short time only.

### Exercise

If you had a caesarean, talk with your health care provider before starting to exercise again. Otherwise, you can start as soon as a day after the birth, depending on how fit you were before and if you have any complications. Listen to your body. If you have heavier and brighter bleeding, slow down. If you have pain, stop and rest.

You can begin Kegels (see [Taking Care of Yourself](#)) a day after a vaginal birth. Try walking with your baby in a stroller or carrier. Start swimming once vaginal bleeding and discharge have stopped. And look into yoga and fitness classes for new mothers. Save vigorous exercise – like running – for when your pelvic muscles have recovered. Talk with your health care provider if exercise causes pee or poop leaks, heaviness in your vagina, or pain.