

# Entering Parenthood & Medical Guidelines

Maternity Discharge Handbook



American Hospital of Paris  
NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Post natal



# HOW TO CONTACT US

## IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

An on-duty midwife can be reached 24 hours a day at +33 1 46 41 26 03



## USEFUL CONTACTS

In the first week after childbirth, you can call the maternity midwives at:

**+33 1 46 41 23 06**

or your attending physician

In case of emergency

Go to the Medical Surgical Unit -  
Wing J - Ground floor

Switchboard: **+33 1 46 41 25 25**

or dial 15 (ambulance service)

Early postnatal consultation 4-8  
weeks

after delivery

**+33 1 46 41 84 88**

Supportive care: Acupuncture,  
osteopathy and sophrology

**+33 1 46 41 84 88**

Psychologist

**f2.f2@ahparis.org**

**+33 1.46.46/25.25 or 45.62**

Pediatric consultation

Secretary: **01 46 41 27 67**

Childbirth and parenthood  
sessions **+33 1 46 41 84 88**

In the first week after childbirth,  
you can call the maternity midwives

**at +33 1 46 41 23 06**

or your attending physician



You can also contact the maternity unit secretary:  
**f2.f2@ahparis.org**



# CONGRATULATIONS ON THE BIRTH OF YOUR CHILD!

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**The American Hospital of Paris extends its warmest congratulations to you on the birth of your child.**

Our Maternity team created this handbook so you can easily locate all of the information you need to care for and monitor your baby when you return home. Although not exhaustive, it was designed to provide you with helpful guidelines and advice for the first few weeks.

Please feel free to contact us after your discharge if you have any questions concerning your or your baby's health. You will find our contact details at the end of this handbook.

The Maternity team thanks you for your trust and wishes you a happy return home.

**The Maternity Team of the American Hospital of Paris**

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# DISCHARGE

## GOING HOME

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Discharges from the maternity take place in the morning, once a midwife and/or your doctor from the American Hospital of Paris have come to see you. Prescriptions for you and your newborn will be given to you the day you are discharged.

If you are not breastfeeding, make sure you have formula, bottles and diapers for your baby before going home.

You may request an early discharge, subject to a medical opinion for both you and your infant. Information about early discharge may be provided during your first pregnancy check-ups. If you are considering an early discharge, you must make arrangements for mandatory at-home transitional care provided by a private practice midwife. It is therefore essential to plan ahead to ensure a smooth return home.

We know that the postpartum period is a phase of discovery and adaptation. In the following pages you will find a non-exhaustive list of common postpartum issues, how they can be expected to evolve under normal circumstances, and the signs that indicate you should seek medical attention.

# MOTHER

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Below is a non-exhaustive list of postpartum issues commonly experienced by new mothers, how they can be expected evolve under normal circumstances, and the signs that indicate you should seek medical attention.

## BLEEDING

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Vaginal bleeding after childbirth, called lochia, is a normal part of the recovery process. This bleeding, which may be similar to a heavy menstrual cycle, occurs when blood, mucus and uterine tissue are discharged by your body. It is generally more intense in the first days after childbirth, then gradually diminishes in volume and color over the following weeks.



### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

It is important to pay attention to your body and recognize any signs that require medical attention. If you experience very heavy bleeding (if you soak more than one sanitary pad or tampon per hour), abnormally large blood clots or an unpleasant odor emanating from the discharge, or if the bleeding intensifies instead of diminishing, we recommend that you rapidly seek medical attention.

**Additional symptoms such as severe abdominal pain, fever, persistent chills, extreme weakness and any other worrying manifestations are signs you should contact your doctor.**

## PAIN



The postpartum period is the timespan during which your body recovers from childbirth. It is common to experience uterine pain and contractions during this time. These contractions, sometimes called afterpains, are normal and mean that your uterus is gradually returning to its regular size. They vary in intensity and are typically stronger in the first days following childbirth, in particular if you are breastfeeding.



### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

If you experience intense pain that doesn't diminish with over-the-counter pain relievers, extremely painful and frequent contractions, or if you notice redness, swelling or an unusually hot area on your abdomen, we recommend that you seek prompt medical attention.



## BREASTS (WITH OR WITHOUT BREASTFEEDING)

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Whether or not you intend to breastfeed your baby, your breasts might feel tight and tender as your body increases lactation and adapts to the needs of your newborn. It is normal for your breasts to become swollen, warm and sensitive to touch, especially in the first days after childbirth. This is probably a sign that your milk is “coming in” and your body is preparing for increased milk production.



### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

It is important to monitor any unusual changes and to take preventive measures to avoid potential problems. For example, breast engorgement may occur if milk overfills your milk ducts. To avoid engorgement, make sure you empty both breasts each time your baby nurses. You can also use a warm compress and gentle massage to alleviate the swelling.

Rarer complications, including lymphangitis or breast abscess, may occur. Lymphangitis is an inflammation of the lymph vessels and manifests through intense pain, redness and heat in the breast(s). If you have these symptoms or if you have a fever, it is important that you promptly seek help from a healthcare professional. A breast abscess, which is even rarer, can cause an area of the breast to become painful and swollen. It is often combined with a fever and requires immediate medical treatment.

We encourage you to become familiar with good breastfeeding techniques and to ask for help from our team or a lactation specialist to prevent these complications.

## FEVER

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The postpartum period is a recovery phase when your body adapts to the changes that occurred during pregnancy and childbirth. It is normal for your body temperature to increase slightly in the first days after giving birth. However, it is important to monitor your temperature and know how to recognize any signs that might suggest an underlying problem.



### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

If your temperature rises above 38°C (100.4°F) for several hours, or if you experience chills, excessive sweating, intense achiness or any other unusual symptom, it could be a sign of infection. Postpartum infections, while rare, may occur in the uterus (endometritis) or the breasts (mastitis), for example.

**In case of persistent fever or other worrying symptoms, it is recommended that you promptly seek help from a healthcare professional. If you are breastfeeding, you may need to stop temporarily so the underlying cause of the symptoms can be**

## URINARY SIGNS

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### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

If you experience pain when urinating or difficulty completely voiding your bladder, especially if these symptoms are combined with persistent pelvic pain, fever, chills or any other worrying sign, you must promptly call your doctor.

## BIRTH CONTROL

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After the birth of your baby, it may be useful to learn about the different birth control options available. You can then choose the method that suits you best, based on your needs and preferences after childbirth. We recommend discussing this with your gynecologist, who can give you advice based on your health and personal situation.

Certain oral contraceptives can be used in the weeks following childbirth. Other options, like contraceptive implants and intrauterine devices (IUD), are often delayed until the uterus returns to its normal size. If you had a cesarean section, the insertion of an IUD is also deferred.

### BREASTFEEDING AND BIRTH CONTROL

Even if you exclusively breastfeed your baby, you can still use birth control, since the risk of becoming pregnant again does exist. There are options designed for this situation that carry no contraindications for your newborn. These include low-dose progestin-only minipills, implants, and copper or levonorgestrel IUDs.

### NON-HORMONAL METHODS

If you would rather avoid hormones, you may opt for non-hormonal methods such as a copper IUD, which is effective without causing hormonal side effects, or barrier methods like condoms. However, these methods are generally slightly less effective.

### PERMANENT METHODS

If you are sure you don't want to have any more children, you may consider permanent birth control methods such as tubal ligation or a vasectomy for your partner.

### LONG-TERM PLANNING

Methods such as implants and IUDs offer protection for several years with minimal effort required, while eliminating the risk of forgetting to take a daily pill or use another form of contraception.

Your birth control preferences may change over time. Don't hesitate to speak regularly with a healthcare provider about your choice of contraception, and consider changing methods if necessary.

**Your decision to use birth control in the postpartum period is personal, and it is essential to choose a method that meets your needs.**

## CESAREAN SECTION

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A cesarean section, or C-section, is a major surgical procedure. It is therefore vital to give your body time to recover. It is normal to feel pain and discomfort after a C-section. Take the pain relievers prescribed by your doctor according to the instructions. If the pain becomes excessive or if you are worried, don't hesitate to contact a healthcare professional.

Listen to your body and take things slowly. When you are ready, you can add gentle movements and walking to your daily routine. This can help improve circulation and prevent blood clots from forming (venous thrombosis). Don't hesitate to call on your partner, family and friends for help with everyday tasks such as lifting, meal prep and caring for your baby. Don't feel uncomfortable asking for the support you need.

### INCISION CARE

Make sure you keep the incision site clean and dry. Bruising around the scar is normal, and the color will gradually evolve from purple to blue to yellow. Numbness around the wound is also common; the sensation will return to your skin little by little after a few weeks.

**Follow the instructions on wound care that were provided by your medical team.**



### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

If you observe excessive redness, a purulent discharge or abnormal swelling around the scar, it is important to seek prompt medical attention.

Once the incision has healed (approximately ten days), you may gently massage the scar to prevent adhesions from forming.

## VAGINAL TEAR OR EPISIOTOMY

If you had a vaginal tear or an episiotomy during childbirth, ensuring proper care during your recovery is important. Below are a few tips to help you gently heal and recognize the signs that require medical attention.



**Keep the area clean** by gently cleansing with warm water after using the bathroom. Avoid soaps containing fragrance and/or irritants.



**Gently pat dry** the area after cleaning. Avoid rubbing, which may cause skin irritation.



**Wear breathable cotton underwear** to minimize perspiration and friction. You may consider using disposable underwear specially designed for the postpartum period.



**Eat foods that are rich in fiber and drink plenty of water** to prevent constipation, as increased pressure might cause additional discomfort to your perineum.



### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

Contact your healthcare provider if you have signs of infection such as redness, swelling, excessive heat, fever or purulent discharge. A certain amount of pain and discomfort are normal, but if you experience acute, intense or increasing pain, it could be a sign of infection or complication.

**If you notice that the incision area is not healing as expected, or if you are concerned about the appearance of the scar, contact a healthcare professional.**



## MANAGING PAIN AND DISCOMFORT

Follow the instructions given by your care team on managing pain. Solutions include pain-relieving positions, cold packs or even placing a bag of frozen peas (used exclusively for this purpose, of course) against the perineum. You may need to take pain killers for relief.

## POSTPARTUM PHYSIOTHERAPY

Pelvic floor physiotherapy is a key component of your postpartum recovery. Its purpose is to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles, which were under extra strain and became stretched during your pregnancy and delivery.

**Ideally, pelvic floor physiotherapy should begin six to eight weeks after childbirth, once your body has had time to heal.**

You can call on midwives or physiotherapists specialized in the pelvic floor. These professionals are trained to evaluate your perineum and pelvic floor, give you specific exercises to do and provide support throughout the muscle-strengthening process.

To ensure even better results, you will be asked to continue doing the exercises at home.

## SEXUALITY

Renewing sexual intimacy with your partner will happen when you are ready. There are no norms.

If you have questions, do not hesitate to talk about it during your postnatal check-up.

## BEWARE OF VIRUSES

Below are a few tips for avoiding viruses:

- Wash your hands thoroughly before and after all physical contact, after caring for your baby (diaper change, feeding, cuddle), and after coughing, blowing your nose and using the bathroom.
- If you have the slightest symptom affecting the ears/nose/throat, it is recommended that you wear a mask.

## MOOD, SADNESS, FATIGUE

The postpartum period is an intense emotional and physical experience. It is normal to feel a wide range of emotions – from joy and wonder to fatigue and moments of sadness. The combined effect of hormonal changes, adapting to your role as a new mother and lack of sleep may impact your mood.

It is common to experience extreme fatigue and exhaustion during the first weeks, as your body recovers from childbirth and adapts to the needs of your newborn. It is also normal to experience moments of sadness and emotional sensitivity. These feelings may be due to the fact that you are adjusting to a new reality. They may also be caused by hormonal changes and the challenges of parenthood.

It is important to remember that postpartum blues, also known as baby blues, is a frequent emotional reaction that generally sets in a few days after giving birth. Symptoms include mood swings, being extra sensitive and crying “for no reason.” These feelings are often temporary and usually disappear within a few weeks;



### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

If you experience persistent sadness, lack of interest in the activities you typically enjoy, loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, low self-esteem or persistent negative thoughts, it is crucial to seek help from a professional. Postpartum depression requires medical attention and support to ensure your well-being and that of your family.

**Don't hesitate to talk to our medical teams if you have questions or concerns about your postpartum emotions and mental well-being. We are here to support and guide you through this transitional period.**



## GOOD TO KNOW

As part of our emotional support program, we encourage you to complete a scientifically proven online postpartum survey: the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS). This tool will help us evaluate your well-being and emotions after childbirth, in order to offer you personalized support.



# NEWBORN

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Below is a non-exhaustive list of common postpartum issues experienced by newborns, how these issues can be expected to evolve under normal circumstances, and the signs that indicate you should seek medical attention.

## FEEDING: FORMULA/BREAST MILK

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Feeding your baby will be one of your main preoccupations during this period of discovery. Whether you choose breast milk or formula, it is important to take your newborn's nutritional needs into account.

If you decide to breastfeed, know that colostrum, the first breast milk produced by your body, is rich in essential nutrients for your baby. Be sure to stay hydrated and eat a balanced diet to sustain your milk production. If you have problems breastfeeding, don't hesitate to contact a lactation specialist or our medical team for advice and support.

If you opt for bottle feeding, choose a formula that is appropriate to your baby's age. Make sure you sterilize the bottles and nipples before each use to avoid contamination. Also remember to respect the recommended amounts based on your baby's age and needs.



### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

Watch for abnormal signs and be attentive to any changes in your baby's behavior and state of health. If he seems to be having trouble sucking, constantly refuses to eat, vomits frequently, has diarrhea, or shows signs of discomfort, fever, excessive sleepiness or irritability, it is recommended that you promptly seek medical attention. These signs might indicate digestive issues, allergies or other medical concerns.

**Our midwives and pediatricians are available to answer your questions and guide you through the challenges of feeding your baby.**

## BATHING

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Bathing your newborn can be a wonderful and intimate experience that helps you create a bond while caring for your baby. Below are a few tips to help you make this experience pleasant and safe.

### FREQUENCY

During the first weeks, it may be enough to bathe your baby every two to three days. Newborns' skin is delicate and naturally regulates its own sebum levels. It is therefore preferable to avoid frequent bathing.

### PREPARING THE BATH

Make sure you have everything you need within reach before starting the bath. Fill the tub with warm water (approximately 37°C/98.6°F) and test the temperature using a thermometer or the inside of your wrist to make sure it is neither too warm nor too cold.





Bath time can be an opportunity to bond with your baby. Take your time, be gentle and savor these precious moments of closeness and discovery.

### SAFETY

When bathing a newborn, it is crucial that you support her head and neck at all times. You can hold your baby in the water with one hand under her head and the other gently sustaining her body. Never leave your baby unattended in the bath, not even for an instant.

### SOAPS AND SHAMPOOS

Using gentle soap and shampoo specially formulated for babies. Avoid products containing fragrance or irritants that might harm your baby's sensitive skin.

### DURATION

A newborn baby's bath should not last too long - generally no more than five to ten minutes. It is difficult for babies to regulate their body temperature; they might get cold if the bath is too long.

### DRYING OFF AND GETTING DRESSED

After the bath, wrap your baby in a soft towel and gently pat his skin to dry him off. Make sure you carefully dry folds in the skin to avoid rashes. Dress your baby in clean, comfortable clothes.

### BABY'S REACTION

Each baby reacts differently to bathing. Some love water, while others are less comfortable. Be attentive to the signs your baby gives you and adjust the bath accordingly.

## UMBILICAL CORD CARE

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Caring for your baby's umbilical cord stump is important to ensure proper healing. The umbilical cord, which was the lifeline between you and your baby during pregnancy, requires certain precautions to avoid infection.

To take care of the stump, make sure you keep it clean and dry. Dampen a sterile gauze pad with water and soap to gently cleanse the base of umbilical cord, then rinse and dry thoroughly. Repeat this several times a day, until the stump becomes dry and naturally falls off. Expose the stump to air as often as possible and make sure your baby's diaper doesn't rub the area. Keep the front of the diaper folded down, as demonstrated by the maternity team during your stay.



### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

Watch for any abnormal signs. If you observe redness, a purulent discharge, swelling or an unpleasant odor at the base of the cord, it is important to promptly consult a healthcare professional. These signs could indicate an infection or other complication requiring medical care.

**In general, the umbilical cord stump falls off in the first weeks of your baby's life. After it falls off, continue to monitor the area for any signs of redness, pain or irritation.**



## WEIGHT

The period following the birth of your baby is a time of discovery and adjustments. Weight gain is an essential aspect of your baby's growth and development.

**Over the course of the first weeks, it is normal for your baby to lose a little weight, usually up to 10% of her birth weight.** This weight loss is mainly due to the elimination of excess fluids. After this period your baby will gain weight on a regular basis. If you have decided to breastfeed, it might help to know that your child's weight gain rate may be slightly different than that of formula-fed babies.

We encourage you to closely monitor your baby's weight gain and to become familiar with the signals he sends you. If you choose to track your baby's weight once you have left the maternity, different options are available. A midwife, pediatrician or center for maternal and infant protection (PMI) in France can perform this task. They are also available to provide important information and reassurance about your baby's growth and development.



### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

If you observe any worrisome changes in your baby's weight gain, such as stagnation or significant weight loss, or if you see signs such as a decrease in appetite, changes in stool or unusual behavior, it is recommended that you promptly contact a healthcare professional.

## INFANT JAUNDICE

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Infant jaundice occurs when a newborn's liver is not mature enough to efficiently eliminate bilirubin, a yellow pigment produced by the breakdown of red blood cells. This pigment can build up in the blood and cause a yellow discoloration of your newborn's skin and eyes.

In most cases, infant jaundice is a normal and temporary condition in newborns, generally occurring two to three days after birth. It peaks around the fifth day and then starts to naturally diminish afterwards.

However, it is important to watch closely for signs of jaundice in your baby. If the jaundice is very intense, if it lasts for more than two weeks after the birth,

or if you notice other symptoms such as fatigue, lack of energy, reduced responsiveness, difficulty nursing or sucking from a bottle, or a dramatic change in behavior, it is recommended that you contact a healthcare professional. Medical treatment may be necessary to reduce the levels of bilirubin.

If you have any questions or concerns about infant jaundice or your newborn's health, do not hesitate to contact us. You can also discuss your baby's needs with our pediatricians or a private practice healthcare provider, who will guide you through the treatment of your baby's jaundice.

## BABY'S SLEEPING PATTERNS AND POSITION

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The sleeping patterns of newborns vary significantly, and each baby's rhythm is different. **Newborns generally sleep for 16 to 18 hours a day** in several short phases and wake up frequently to feed.

Newborns' sleeping patterns are often unpredictable, alternating between periods of deep sleep and "active" sleep phases where they may appear to be awake. It is normal for babies to wake up at night to feed; these habits will change over time.

When you put your baby to bed, make sure he is on his back in a cradle or a safe bed. Remove all pillows, plush toys and blankets that could cause suffocation. Sleep sacks designed for babies are available with different thermal ratings and offer a safe, risk-free solution to keep your baby warm. Maintain the temperature in the room between 18 and 20°C (64.4 - 68°F), and adapt bedclothes to the season and temperature in the room.



### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

If you observe any worrisome changes in your baby's sleeping behavior, such as severe agitation and difficulty falling asleep, or if you are concerned about his sleeping environment, don't hesitate to consult a healthcare professional. We can provide personalized advice to help your baby develop healthy sleeping habits.

## PEDIATRIC FOLLOW-UP

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If you have any questions or concerns about your newborn's health or care, don't hesitate to ask our medical team for advice.

A check-up by your pediatrician, family practitioner, midwife or local center for maternal and infant protection is recommended eight to ten days after your discharge.



# PARTNER

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## Dear Partner, Co-parent,

We know that your baby's birth is a period of profound transformation and adaptation for you as well. As a parent, you play a vital role in supporting the mother and creating a positive family environment. We would like to give you some important information to help you take care of yourself and your baby.

Just like the mother, the partner is also going through emotional change during this time. You might experience a mix of feelings ranging from joy and excitement to anxiety and uncertainty. Don't hesitate to express your feelings and seek support if necessary, be it from the mother, your family, your friends or a mental health professional.

Taking care of your physical health is also important. Make sure you maintain a healthy diet and remain active, but also take time to rest. Lack of sleep is common for new parents, so be sure to find the time to recharge your batteries, whether by sharing tasks with your partner or asking for help from family and friends.

Be attentive to signs that you may need to consult a healthcare provider. If you experience persistent sadness, excessive anxiety, changes in your appetite or sleeping patterns, or if you have invasive negative thoughts, it is important to seek help from a professional. Mental health is as crucial for the partner as it is for the mother.

As partner and parent, you play a fundamental role in raising and caring for your child. Engage as much as possible, take the time to build a bond with your baby and don't hesitate to learn everyday skills such as changing diapers and giving baths.

We are here to support you throughout your journey into parenthood. If you have any questions or concerns about your own health, how to support the mother, or your baby's needs, don't hesitate to contact us. We are committed to providing the information and support you need during this unique time.

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