

After you've had your baby

- information booklet



- ▶ **What to do if you don't feel well**
- ▶ **How to stay healthy**
- ▶ **Where to go for help:**
websites, phone numbers and people

Important numbers:

Community midwives office: 020 8690 5036

Your GP:

Health Visitor:

NHS DIRECT: 0845 4647 / NHS 111

After you've had your baby

Most women feel tired but well after they've had a baby. However, sometimes women feel unwell. In most cases, this is nothing to worry about but in rare cases, women may need to seek help immediately. It can be difficult knowing what to do, so this leaflet has been written to help you to keep yourself well, tell you what problems may occur, what you can do and when you should contact a midwife or doctor.

The first section of this leaflet describes the sort of problems where you/your partner should seek help immediately. **These problems are in the red box.**



Dial 999 if:

- ▶ You are short of breath even when you are resting
- ▶ You have chest pain
- ▶ You have pain, redness and swelling at the back of your leg below the knee (calf)
- ▶ You are losing a lot of blood from your vagina (more than a cupful) or you keep passing very large clots and you feel dizzy, sweaty or faint
- ▶ You have a severe headache that does not go away as well as flashing lights or problems with your eyes, a swollen face, nausea or vomiting



Call your Midwife or GP immediately if:

- ▶ You have a high temperature or fever (as well as a high temperature, you may feel shivery and unwell. You may have a sore throat, smelly discharge from your vagina, feel sore in the stomach area, have very full breasts or have one very red patch on your breast which is really sore). Women can become ill very quickly if infections are not treated, so seek help straight away.
- ▶ You (or your partner/family member) notice you are behaving differently in a way that is worrying such as seeming confused, unable to stop crying, hearing or seeing things that are not there or unable to sleep even when the baby is resting.

If you feel tearful and low for a few days, this may be baby blues which usually get better on their own. However, if it carries on or your behaviour is more worrying, you may have postnatal depression which you do need to get help with

How to stay well after you've had your baby:

- ▶ Be extra careful with hygiene-always wash your hands thoroughly before and after changing your sanitary towels, going to the toilet and changing baby's nappies
- ▶ Get as much rest as possible, rest or sleep when baby sleeps whenever you can
- ▶ Eat a healthy diet and drink plenty of water
- ▶ Accept help from friends and family with cooking meals, housework and looking after other children
- ▶ Talk to the midwife or health visitor when she visits about any worries you have



The next section of this leaflet tells you about other problems you may have after you have had your baby and what you can do and where you can go to get more help and information.

If you want advice about any aspect of looking after yourself or your baby, **www.nhs.uk** is a website we recommend for helpful advice. Alternatively, contact your midwife or health visitor using the numbers on the front of this leaflet.

Remember, if you have any of the problems in the red box on the page opposite, seek help immediately.



Breasts and breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the normal, healthy way to feed your baby but it can take time to learn. The first few minutes of breastfeeding may be uncomfortable for the first few days. However, if you experience any ongoing pain, please seek help from the people below to check baby is properly attached when feeding. There is lots of support and information to help you with breastfeeding. If you are having problems and would like to talk to a breastfeeding supporter, you can call the following support /help lines:

Community Midwives office

020 8690 5036 9am-5pm, out of hours goes through to Labour Ward

National Breastfeeding Helpline

0300 100 0212 9.30am – 9.30pm -7 days a week

NCT Breastfeeding helpline

0300 330 0771 8am-10pm – 7days a week

Breastfeeding Network helpline

0300 100 0210 9.30am – 9.30pm -7 days a week

La Leche League helpline

0845 120 2918 24 hours a day

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

08444 122 949 9.30am – 10.30pm 7 days a week

Breastfeeding groups in the community can offer you help and support when getting started with breastfeeding. For a current list of local groups please visit www.lewisham.nhs.uk and search 'breastfeeding', check under A-Z of services or ask your Midwife or Health Visitor.



It is important for you to take a vitamin D supplement whilst you are breastfeeding and to give vitamin D drops to your baby for healthy bones. Please ask your Health Visitor or Midwife for suitable supplements.

Bladder

It's quite common after having a baby to leak urine accidentally if you laugh, cough or move suddenly. Pelvic floor exercises can help.

For more information, ask your midwife or health visitor or go to www.nhs.uk

Getting back in shape: healthy eating and exercise

Postnatal exercises will help to tone up the muscles of your pelvic floor and tummy, and help you regain your waist. They will also get you moving and feeling generally fitter. There may also be local exercise classes which are especially aimed at new mums.

Tummy

It is normal for your tummy to still feel big or baggy after the baby is born. However, it is important to eat a healthy diet and get regular exercise. For more information see www.nhs.uk

For more information about exercise sessions near to you, ask your midwife or health visitor or go to:

<http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/sport/Pages/default.aspx>

Stitches

If you've had stitches after tearing or an episiotomy, bathe the area often in clean warm water to help it heal. Have a bath or shower with plain warm water. After bathing, dry yourself carefully.

If your stitches are sore and uncomfortable, tell your midwife as they may be able to recommend treatment.

Caesarean section

If you have had a caesarean section, you will have a dressing over the wound, which will usually be taken off after five days.

The midwife and/or doctor will check your wound when you are in hospital. Let the midwife know if:

- ▶ you feel very sore around the wound site
- ▶ you notice liquid or discharge coming out of it
- ▶ the wound feels very hot, looks very red or smells unpleasant
- ▶ you feel feverish and hot

Be extra careful that you wash your hands **before and after** changing your sanitary towels, going to the toilet and changing baby's nappies and that people around you do too. This also applies to friends, family and health workers.



Smoking

Many people who haven't managed to give up smoking before the baby is born will be keen to give up once the baby has arrived. Stopping smoking is the best thing that you or your partner can do for your own and your baby's health.

Evidence suggests that you are four times more likely to succeed at stopping smoking if you get help from an expert. If you want to quit, ask for help from your GP, Pharmacist or contact: NHS Stop Smoking Helpline on (free number) **0800 022 4332** or Lewisham Stop Smoking Service on (free number) **0800 0820 388**

Alcohol

The government advises that people should not regularly drink more than the daily unit guidelines. This is 2-3 units of alcohol for women (equivalent to a 175ml glass of wine) or 3-4 units of alcohol for men (equivalent to a pint and a half of 4% beer). Regularly drinking more than this has many health risks. If you are breastfeeding your baby, the advice from Dr Wendy Jones, a pharmacist with the Breastfeeding Network is, *"An occasional glass of wine is fine, but binge or regular drinking above the daily unit guidelines of two to three alcohol units is harmful to mum and baby. It is better not to drink every day but to keep alcohol for social occasions."*

See **drinkaware.co.uk** for more information.

If you think you are drinking too much alcohol, see your GP or call Lewisham Community Drugs and Alcohol Service on: **020 3228 1050**

You should never sleep in bed with your baby if you or your partner have been drinking alcohol or are smokers. This increases the risk of cot death.

Help with being a new parent

Being a new parent can be a wonderful and fulfilling experience. It can also be the hardest thing any of us ever has to do. For help and support see: www.nhs.uk - **'being a parent'** section, or ask your midwife or health visitor for local groups where you can meet new mums and dads for support and information.

For a current list of local groups please visit www.lewisham.nhs.uk and search 'breastfeeding' or check under A-Z of services. You can also ask your midwife or health visitor about local support.

Baby blues

Up to 80% of mothers go through the baby blues, often about three or four days after the birth. You might feel very anxious about small things or just keep bursting into tears for no apparent reason. You will usually find this only lasts a day or so.

Postnatal depression

For about 10% of mothers baby blues may progress into a depression that may be quite deep. Symptoms commonly include:

- ▶ Feelings of hopelessness.
- ▶ Feeling angry and/or exhausted
- ▶ Feeling low, unhappy, tired, irritable
- ▶ Feeling unable to cope with the simplest tasks.

If you feel like this, you must get help. You should contact your health visitor or GP and explain how you are feeling. A family member or a friend might get in touch with them after talking to you about it. You can also contact an organisation such as the Association for Post-Natal Illness (see below) for more information.

External links:

- ▶ **Depression Alliance: Depression during and after pregnancy**
www.depressionalliance.org/
- ▶ **Association for Postnatal Illness**
<http://apni.org/>
T: 020 7386 0868

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