

Incision Care After Vaginal Birth



After your baby's birth, you may have needed stitches in the skin near your vagina. The stitches might have closed a cut that enlarged the opening of your vagina (episiotomy). Or you may have needed stitches to repair torn skin. Either way, your stitches should dissolve in weeks. Until then, use this handout as a guide to help ease any pain and aid healing.

Keep clean

You can reduce your risk of infection by keeping the area around the stitches clean. These hints can help:

- Gently wipe from front to back after you urinate or have a bowel movement.
- After wiping, spray warm water on the stitches. Pat dry. If you are too sore, just spray the area after urination and then pat dry without wiping.
- Don't use soap or any solution except water unless instructed by your healthcare provider.
- Change sanitary pads at least every 2 to 4 hours.

Eat to stay regular

Having bowel movements is easier if you're not constipated. Follow these tips:

- Eat fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains, and bran cereals.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Don't strain to have a bowel movement.
- Ask your healthcare provider about using a stool softener.

Reduce your discomfort

Here are some tips to make you more comfortable:

- Sit in a warm bath (sitz bath).
- Place cold packs or heat packs on your stitches. Keep a thin towel between the pack and your skin.
- Sit on a firm seat so the stitches pull less.
- Use medicated spray as ordered by your healthcare provider.

Call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you have:

- Heavy or gushing bleeding from the vagina
- Discharge that has a bad odor
- Severe pain in the belly or increased pain near your stitches

- If your episiotomy or tear opens
- Fever or chills
- No bowel movement within 1 week after the birth of your baby
- Pain or urgency with urination, or inability to urinate

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