

# Childbirth Series

## Section Five: Postpartum Care



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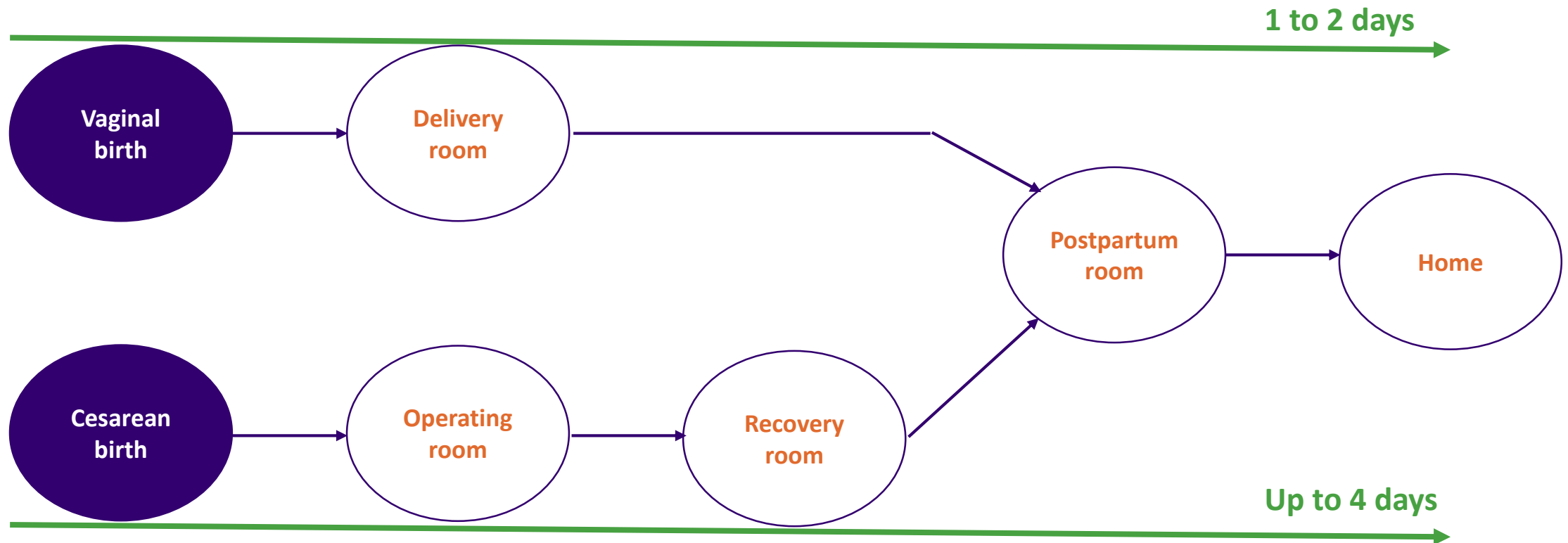
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# Agenda

1. Post-birth experience
2. How to take care of yourself after delivery
3. Pregnancy brain
4. Postpartum mood disorders
5. When to call your doctor
6. Post-birth warning signs
7. Resources for help at home

# What to Expect



# What You May Experience

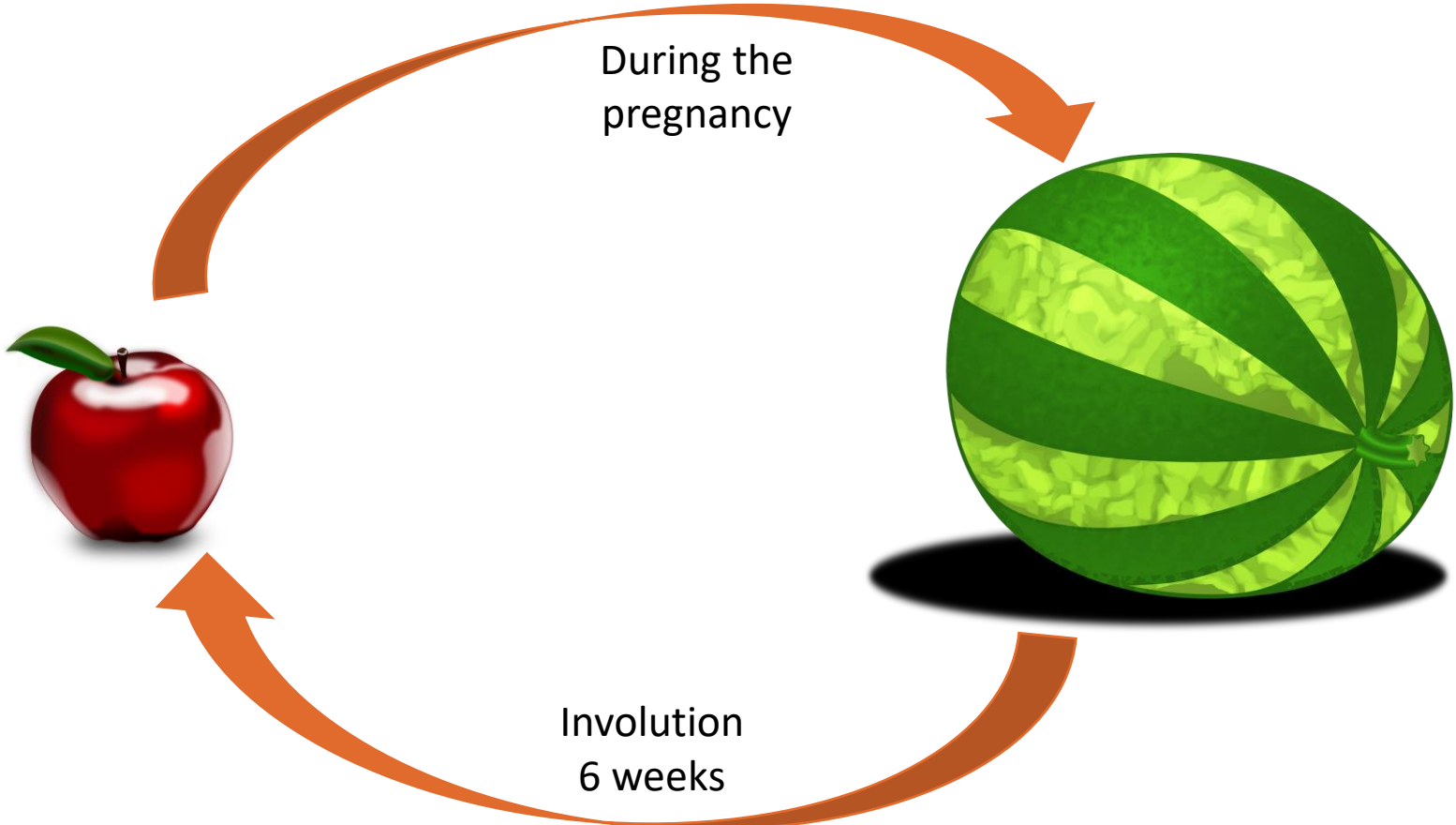
## ❖ Shivering

- Fifty percent of patients may experience
- Last up to an hour
- Causes:
  - Not fully understood
  - Fluid loss, blood loss, heat loss
  - Hormonal changes
- Normal post-birth experience
- Not a sign of infection
- Using warm blanket helps mitigate symptoms

## ❖ Fundal massage

- Help the uterus contract properly
- Uncomfortable procedure
- Help decrease the bleeding
- Prevent postpartum hemorrhaging

# Involution



# Afterpain

## What it means

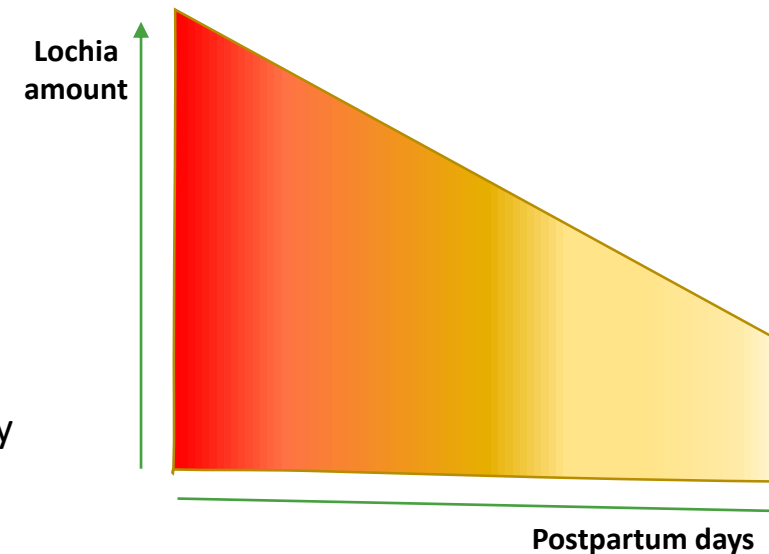
- ❖ Contractions of the muscle of the uterus
- ❖ Less painful than labor contractions
- ❖ More noticeable in the first 3 days following birth
- ❖ Last about a week
- ❖ Breastfeeding speeds up the involution process, causes stronger uterine contractions

## How to help

- ❖ Empty your bladder regularly, or before breastfeeding
- ❖ Take Motrin or Tylenol
- ❖ Apply cold or heat compress to the lower abdominal area
- ❖ Avoid using hot water bottle or microwaving a wet towel

# Lochia

- ❖ The vaginal discharge after giving birth
- ❖ It contains extra blood, tissue, and lining shed from the uterus and bacteria.
- ❖ Similar to a menstrual flow
- ❖ Color change:
  - Bright red in the first few days after birth
  - Less and lighter each day
  - Gradually become pinkish, then turns brown and more watery
- ❖ Up to 6 weeks after delivery
- ❖ The flow of lochia is not dependent on the type of delivery.





# How to Manage Your Lochia

## What to do

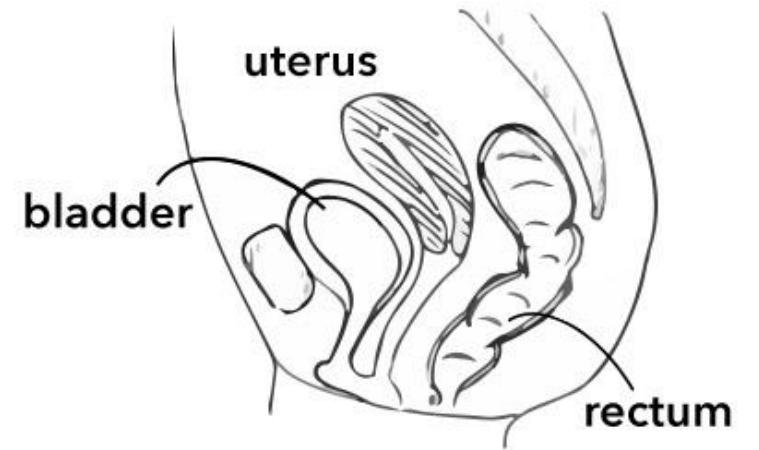
- ❖ Avoid using tampons or inserting anything into the vagina.
- ❖ Sanitary pads are the best option.
- ❖ Empty your bladder often.

## When to call your doctor

- ❖ The color of lochia changes back to bright red.
- ❖ Heavy bleeding
- ❖ Passing a big blood clot like a golf ball or the size of your fist
- ❖ Having a strong smell

# Caring for Your Bladder after Delivery

- ❖ Having an empty bladder helps with the involution.
- ❖ Foley catheter may be required to empty bladder in some cases.
- ❖ Anatomically, the uterus:
  - Behind the bladder
  - In front of the rectum
- ❖ Try to empty your bladder more often, every 2-3 hours, especially before breastfeeding.



# Perineal Care

## ❖ Ice pack

- Reduces swelling, pain
- Can be applied for the first 24 hours

## ❖ Topical anesthetic like Dermoplast Pain Relieving Spray

- Reduce discomfort, infection
- Apply after each peri-care, up to 4 times a day

## ❖ Witch hazel pads

- Reduce discomfort, swelling
- Stop the bacteria from growing
- Apply new pads as needed, up to 6 times a day.

## ❖ Sitz bath

- Good hygiene, eases the pain and promotes healing
- About 10-15 minutes, 2-3 times a day, for the first 1-2 weeks after delivery

## ❖ Old methods such as smoke therapy, dry heat lamp, or Perry light are not recommended.

## ❖ Call your doctor if your symptoms:

- Do not improve
- Get worse in a week
- Clear up but then come back

# Incision Care after a Cesarean Section

- ❖ Keep your incision dry and clean.
- ❖ Wear the abdominal binder.
  - Reduce the pain
  - Support the abdominal muscles and the incision
  - Fit comfortably, not too tight
  - Cover 1-2 inches below the incision.
- ❖ Take pain medication as prescribed by your doctor.
  - Most women need pain medication for the first 2 weeks.
  - Safe for breastfeeding
- ❖ A common problem: burning sensation or shooting pain
  - Above the incision or on the side
  - It's normal, not a sign of infection
  - It is nerve fibers repairing itself
- ❖ **Call your doctor if you are having any signs of infection.**

# Activities and Exercise

## ❖ Benefits of early ambulating

- Improve the circulation
- Prevent the development of blood clots
- Start the healing process

## ❖ Ambulating

- Vaginal delivery: Within 1-2 hours after delivery
- Cesarean section: Within 8 hours after surgery

## ❖ Avoid most housework for the first 6 weeks.

## ❖ Rest when your baby is sleeping.

## ❖ No heavy lifting

## ❖ It is permissible to walk the stairs, if pain is manageable.

## ❖ Do not resume any exercise until you are cleared from your doctor, even with pelvic floor muscle exercise.

# Bathing

## Vaginal delivery

- ❖ Lower the risk of infection
- ❖ Can use soap in the perineal area and dab dry
- ❖ Avoid soaking for a long period in bath water.
- ❖ No bathtub
- ❖ Long showers may cause you to feel dizzy or fainting.

## Cesarean Section

- ❖ Need permission from your doctor
- ❖ Only rinse through the wound.
- ❖ Do not apply soap directly over your incision.
- ❖ Having a stool or a chair to sit
- ❖ Short, quick and warm shower
- ❖ No bathtub

# Bowel Elimination

- ❖ May not have a bowel movement for a few days after delivery.
- ❖ Drink at least 6-8 glasses of water per day.
- ❖ Eat fruits and vegetables.
- ❖ Ambulate regularly.
- ❖ Take a stool softener to draw more water into the stool.
- ❖ Take a laxative to increase the transit of the movement of the stool through the bowel.
- ❖ Talk to your doctor if you feel uncomfortable or constipated.



# Weight Loss

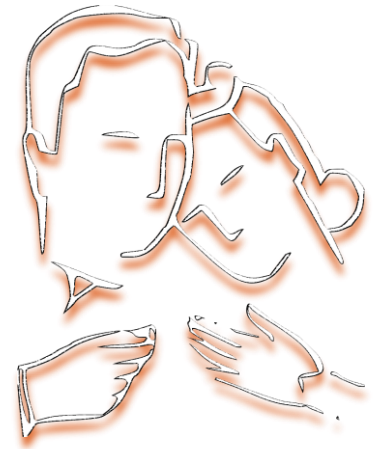
- ❖ Lose about 10-15 lbs. immediately right after birth from
  - The weight of the baby
  - The weight of the placenta
  - The weight of the amniotic fluid
- ❖ Breastfeeding helps you go back to your pre-pregnancy weight soon.
- ❖ Should not go on a diet
- ❖ Discuss with your doctor about healthy exercises and healthy, nutritious programs.
- ❖ Have enough calcium intake:
  - Bone density is reduced over time starting at 30 years old.
  - During pregnancy and breastfeeding, calcium stored in bone is further diminished.
  - There is a calcium rebound after pregnancy or cessation of breastfeeding.
  - To maximize the rate of reabsorption, space out the intake of calcium throughout the day.





# Menstrual Cycle and Resuming Sex

- ❖ When your menstrual period returns
  - Non-nursing mothers: About 6-8 weeks after giving birth
  - Nursing mothers: Between 2-12 months after delivery and may be irregular
- ❖ No sexual activity for the first 6 weeks after giving birth.
- ❖ Contraception methods
  - Non-hormonal: Barrier method like condoms, female condoms and copper intrauterine device
  - Hormonal: Inhibits ovulation by introducing exotic estrogen and progestin
- ❖ Should wait at least one year between pregnancies to allow your body to fully recover



# Pregnancy Brain

## ❖ “Mommy brain”

- Tend to be forgetful
- Difficulty remembering something just done
- Lasts up to 2 years after the baby is born

## ❖ Cause

- Hormonal changes related to pregnancy
- Physical changes
- Change in the brain gray matter due to an adaptive behavior for moms to prepare them for the care of their pregnancy and their newborn

## ❖ Ways to cope with

- Aiding your memory: Write down tasks, set up phone reminders
- Self-care by taking naps
- Make sleeping a priority.



# Postpartum Mood Disorders

- ❖ Life with a new baby can be thrilling and exciting.
- ❖ It's very common for women to:
  - Feel worried
  - Feel tearful
  - Feel a bit down
- ❖ Classified as:
  - Postpartum Blues
  - Postpartum Depression
  - Postpartum Psychosis



# Postpartum Blues

## Incidence

- About 50-85%, most common, least severe reaction

## Onset

- Occur in the days right after delivery

## Duration

- Symptoms disappear on their own within 1-2 weeks.

## Symptoms

- Sadness, weepiness for no apparent reason
- Irritability, frustration, moodiness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling dependent on others

# Postpartum Depression

## Incidence

- At least 10-15%

## Onset

- During the pregnancy
- Right after delivery
- Or any time during the first year

## Symptoms

- Feeling sad or depressed
- Crying for no apparent reason
- Lack of energy or motivation
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Difficulty concentrating or focusing
- Feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless or not being a good mother
- Lack of concern or being overprotective toward the baby
- Thoughts of hurting herself or baby
- Headaches, chest pain, heart palpitations, numbness or hyperventilation
- Feeling restless, irritable or “on edge”

**Make sure to let your doctor know so that they can best support you!**

# Postpartum Psychosis

## Incidence

- About 0.1-0.2%, least common
- Variable based on prior history

## Onset

- 1-2 weeks after delivery

## Symptoms

- Extreme mood swings
- Disorganized, irrational behavior
- Hallucinations or scary thoughts



**Postpartum psychosis is  
a MEDICAL EMERGENCY**

# Get Care for these Post-Birth Warning Signs

## TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

### Call 911

- ❖ Pain in chest
- ❖ Obstructed breathing or shortness of breath
- ❖ Seizures
- ❖ Thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else

### Call your healthcare provider

- ❖ Bleeding, soaking through one pad/hour, or blood clots, the size of an egg or bigger
- ❖ Incision that is not healing
- ❖ Red or swollen leg, that is painful or warm to touch
- ❖ Temperature of 100.4°F or higher
- ❖ Headache that does not get better, even after taking medicine, or bad headache with vision changes

Source: SAVE YOUR LIFE from AWHONN

# Postpartum Follow Up

- ❖ Between 2-3 weeks after delivery
- ❖ At Orange Coast Medical Center, a nurse will follow up with you within 3 days after discharge.





# Resources for Help at Home

- ❖ Orange Coast Medical Center:
  - Childbirth Center: (714) 378-7000
  - Lactation clinic: (714) 378-7612
- ❖ National Poison Center: (800) 222-1222
- ❖ Postpartum Support International (24-Hr Helpline)
  - Call: (800) 944-4773
  - Text: (503) 894-9453



Thank you.