

## Early Days

### Information for mothers during the postnatal period

Congratulations on the birth of your baby. We hope that you have enjoyed the time you spent in our maternity unit.

You are now ready to leave hospital and go home where your community midwife and family doctor will now look after you and your baby. The following advice has been compiled to help you and your baby settle in at home.

#### Important points to remember before leaving

**Please tell us of any change in your home address** - if you are not going to be staying at your usual address or you have moved during your pregnancy, please can you tell the person who is discharging you home.

**Your notes to take home** - please collect your postnatal notes and the baby's Red Book from the staff before going home.

**You need a car seat for baby** - for the safety of your baby, you should always use a correctly fitted and approved car seat for your baby's first journey home.

**Update your family doctor** - please let your family doctor/GP know that you have had your baby and are now at home. Your baby will need to be registered at your GP surgery. You will also need to make an appointment to see your GP for your postnatal check when your baby is six to eight weeks old. It is recommended that you make this appointment as soon as possible.

You will find information on the maternity pages of the Trust website: [www.mtw.nhs.uk/maternity](http://www.mtw.nhs.uk/maternity)

**If you have any problems at home**, you can contact a midwife for advice at any time, day or night. Please call:

Tunbridge Wells Maternity Triage	☎	01892 633500
Maidstone Birth Centre	☎	01622 220161
Crowborough Birth Centre	☎	01892 654080

#### Midwife visits when you are home

Your Community Midwife will contact or visit you, the day after you are discharged from hospital (including weekends).

If she has not contacted you by **3.30 pm** please telephone:

#### Midwifery Liaison Office (weekdays only)

Tunbridge Wells Area	☎	01892 633500
Maidstone Area	☎	01622 220161
Crowborough Area	☎	01892 654080

#### Weekends

Maternity Triage	☎	01892 633500
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#### General information

##### Healthy eating

With a new baby it can sometimes be difficult to find the time to cook or eat properly; however, a balanced diet should give you all the nutrients you need to recover from your pregnancy and delivery.

A balanced diet should include a variation of fruit, vegetables, proteins such as lean meat,

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chicken, fish, eggs and pulses and carbohydrates (e.g. bread, breakfast cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice). Dairy foods (e.g. milk, cheese, and yoghurt) are also a good source of calcium. When breastfeeding, it is recommended that you take a supplement of Vitamin D 10micrograms.

### **Medication and breastfeeding**

Your medication will be prescribed to cater for your specific needs. Any risks regarding breastfeeding and your medication will be discussed with you. If you were anaemic after the birth, you will have been given iron supplements or been advised about taking natural iron supplements.

If you are unsure of the advice you have been given by the team caring for you or have any concerns or questions, please speak to your midwife, pharmacist or a doctor.

### **Faecal or urinary incontinence**

You may experience this temporary problem following childbirth. If you do, please look at the postnatal exercise leaflet you were given on discharge from hospital. You will need to do the pelvic floor exercises described in the leaflet.

If after ten days there is no improvement, you should see your GP who can refer you to a physiotherapist for more intensive exercises.

### **Your birth experience**

After the birth of your baby or at another appropriate opportunity, you may wish to discuss your birth experience with a midwife or doctor. Please let your midwife know so that she can arrange this for you.

On transfer to the community and at discharge from midwifery care, your midwife will give you further opportunities to discuss your birth experience and to ask questions. Following these discussions, if you feel you need more information, your midwife, health visitor or GP can offer additional support.

### **Emotional wellbeing**

After you have had your baby, you may find yourself fluctuating emotionally and experiencing symptoms such as feeling tearful, irritable, unhappy and fatigued. These are normal responses following delivery that affect up to 80% of new mothers.

Contributing factors are: hormonal changes, sleep deprivation and adapting to your new role. This period usually peaks on day 3 and resolves without any need for treatment after 10-14 days.

Your midwife, health visitor and GP are there to support your emotional as well as physical health and can provide help and access to additional support.

### **Domestic abuse**

One in four women experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives and many cases start, or worsen, during pregnancy or after the birth. It may take the form of physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse. Domestic abuse risks both your health and that of your baby.

You can speak in confidence to any member of your health team or you may prefer to phone the **Domestic Violence 24 hour crisis line** ☎ 0808 2000 247. You will be offered help and support.

### **Postnatal exercises**

These simple exercises will make you feel more comfortable after the birth of your baby. Start the day after delivery and continue for at least 3 months. These exercises are suitable following any type of delivery.

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Practice these exercises often during the day e.g. when feeding your baby, when standing at the kitchen sink and after you have passed urine.

You may feel sore at first, but gently moving these muscles will help to reduce any swelling and help healing.

### **Pelvic floor exercises**

The pelvic floor muscles will have been stretched during pregnancy and delivery. If allowed to remain weak, then stress incontinence (leaking urine when you laugh, cough or sneeze) or prolapse may occur. Your pelvic floor muscles are also important for your sex life.

In a standing, sitting, or lying position, pull up or close around your back passage; then close your front passages and draw up inside, hold for the count of 4, then let go slowly. Repeat this exercise 3 more times.

Then start working the muscle gently by lifting around the front and back passages:

- Do not hold your breath, or tighten your tummy, legs or buttocks while doing this exercise
- Once you can do this exercise, try and hold for longer, gradually increasing up to a count of 10
- Rest for a few seconds between each tightening exercise
- Repeat this exercise as many times as you can

For more information please visit The Pelvic, Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy website:

[pogp.csp.org.uk/information-patients](http://pogp.csp.org.uk/information-patients)

### **Your health and possible complications**

It's normal to have some bleeding, discomfort and tiredness after you have your baby.

However, sometimes new mothers experience real medical emergencies in the days and weeks following birth and getting help quickly can help prevent severe illness and improve your recovery.

### **Symptoms, Possible Causes and Action to be taken**

<b>Symptoms</b>	<b>Possible Cause</b>	<b>Action</b>
1. Sudden or very heavy bleeding and signs of shock including faintness, dizziness, palpitation or tachycardia (when you become aware of your heart beating very fast)	Post-partum Haemorrhage	<b>You should get emergency medical attention. Please phone Tunbridge Wells Hospital Maternity Triage ☎ 01892 633500 immediately for advice.</b> You may need to come back to the hospital for review.
2. Fever and chills, lower abdominal pain or tenderness, smelly/offensive vaginal discharge	Infection	<b>You should get emergency medical attention. Please phone Tunbridge Wells Hospital Maternity Triage ☎ 01892 633500 immediately for advice.</b> You may need to come back to the hospital for review.
3. Shortness of breath or chest pain	Pulmonary Embolism	<b>Phone Tunbridge Wells Hospital Maternity Triage ☎ 01892 633500 immediately.</b>

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4. Calf pain, redness or swelling	Deep Vein Thrombosis	<b>Phone Tunbridge Wells Hospital Maternity Triage ☎ 01892 633500 immediately.</b>
Symptoms	Possible Cause	Action
5. Headache, neck stiffness, visual disturbances	Pre-eclampsia	<p>Many women suffer from tension headache and/or migraine; these usually resolve with rest and mild painkillers. If, however, your headache persists you should contact your GP.</p> <p>If you get a severe headache within three days of the birth, which is accompanied by heart-burn type pain, flashing lights, nausea or vomiting, you should <b>phone Tunbridge Wells Hospital Maternity Triage ☎ 01892 633500 immediately for advice.</b> You may need further investigations and treatment.</p>
6. Red painful area on the breast	Mastitis	<p>Non-infective mastitis can be relieved by correct positioning of the baby on the breast and by wearing a correctly fitting bra. If uncomfortable, we suggest using paracetamol and ibuprofen (if tolerated)</p> <p>Infective mastitis is a bacterial infection, usually caused by a cracked nipple, and will need to be seen by your GP. You may need antibiotics.</p> <p>Neither is a reason to cease breastfeeding. Please contact your midwife, GP or feeding clinic for advice.</p>

**Babies' illnesses can become serious very quickly. You know your baby best. If you are worried do not wait - ask for help sooner rather than later.**

If your baby has any of these symptoms	Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• passes much less urine than usual</li> <li>• is pale</li> <li>• grunts with each breath</li> <li>• vomits green fluid</li> <li>• has blood in stools/faeces</li> <li>• poor feeding</li> <li>• a high pitched or weak cry</li> <li>• is much less responsive or floppy</li> <li>• a high fever or sweating</li> </ul>	<p><b>Call Tunbridge Wells Hospital Maternity Triage</b>  <b>☎ 01892 633500</b>  <b>for immediate advice</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stops breathing or goes blue</li> <li>• cannot be woken</li> <li>• is unresponsive</li> <li>• has a fit</li> <li>• has glazed eyes and does not focus on anything</li> </ul>	<p><b>Seek immediate urgent help by dialling 999</b></p>

### Health problems with your baby

Newborn baby health problems are often a source of concern for new parents. It is normal for babies to do lots of things that might be new to you and it is quite natural for you to be concerned that these are health problems when they are probably just normal behaviour.

You will soon learn what is normal for your baby, but we offer the following information and advice to help you recognize potential health problems and decide what action to take:

#### Jaundice

Jaundice can be recognised in your baby if his/her skin becomes yellow. It is a common and usually a temporary and harmless condition. However, jaundice at any time must be assessed. This is particularly important if you think your baby is jaundiced in the first 24-36 hours.

Your community midwife will visit within the first 24 hours of your transfer home and are often the first to recognise jaundice in your baby. They will make a plan to monitor your baby's jaundice.

If you notice possible jaundice in your baby outside of the community midwife visiting, please phone the Maternity Triage ☎ 01892 633500 straightaway for advice. You may be asked to bring your baby into the hospital for assessment and advice about ongoing care and treatment.

If jaundice is prolonged, lasting more than 14 days, you should see your GP who may arrange for you to see a paediatrician at the hospital.

#### Umbilical cord

During the process of separation the cord may become sticky and slightly smelly – this is normal.

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However, should the area around the cord on the baby's tummy become red and inflamed or offensively smelly, advice should be sought from your community midwife, GP or Maternity Triage ☎ 01892 633500, as further treatment may be needed.

### **Baby hats in hospital but NOT when indoors at home**

After your baby is born; he/she may be given a little hat to wear in hospital to avoid hypothermia (low temperature) and hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar).

However, it is **NOT** usually appropriate for your baby to wear a hat indoors once at home. Skin to skin contact is the best method for preventing hypothermia.

### **Health visitor service**

The local health visitor team will be automatically informed of the birth of your baby and will contact you to arrange a home visit at around 10-12 days after the birth.

Health visitors are specialist community nurses who work with new parents offering support and informed advice around child and family health and child development. They offer a minimum of five home visits from birth to age two and can link you into Child Health Clinics and Children's Centres.

**Please use this space to write any notes or questions you may have.**

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**Further information and advice can be obtained from:**

**National Breastfeeding Line** ☎ 0300 100 0212

**NCT breastfeeding line** ☎ 0300 330 0700

**Postnatal Helpline** (weekdays 9am-1pm) ☎ 0300 330 0773

**Ardo Breast pumps** <http://www.ardobreastpumps.co.uk>  
☎ 01823 336362

**Medela Breast pumps** <https://www.medela.co.uk>  
☎ 01538 386650

**West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group** for common childhood illnesses and wellbeing  
<http://childhealthwestkent.nhs.uk>

**First Steps Nutrition** [www.firststepsnutrition.org](http://www.firststepsnutrition.org)

**The Pelvic, Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy**  
[pogp.csp.org.uk/information-patients](http://pogp.csp.org.uk/information-patients)

**Twins & Multiple Births Association** [www.tamba.org.uk](http://www.tamba.org.uk)

☎ 01252 322344

**NHS Smoke-free Helpline** ☎ 0300 123 1220

**Domestic Violence** (24hour crisis line) ☎ 0808 2000 247

**Samaritans** ☎ 0845 790 9090

**NHS 111** ☎ 111

**NHS Choices online** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**MTW NHS Trust is committed to making its patient information accessible in a range of languages and formats. If you need this leaflet in another language or format please ask one of your clinical care team or the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). We will do our best to arrange this.**

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust welcomes all forms of feedback from our service users. If the standard of service you have received from the Trust does not meet your expectations, we want to hear from you. Please speak with the ward manager or the nurse in charge in the first instance, or you can contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on:

**Telephone:** ☎ 01622 224960 or ☎ 01892 632953

**Email:** [mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net](mailto:mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net)

**or visit their office** at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: [www.mtw.nhs.uk](http://www.mtw.nhs.uk) or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

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