

# Post partum Period

## ☆ **Definition:**

It is officially defined as a six-week period after delivery.

## ☆ **Uterus:**

The return of the uterus to its normal size and condition after childbirth is known as involution:

1. At the end of the third stage of labor, the uterus is in the mid line about two centimeters below the level of umbilicus with the fundus resting on the sacral promontory.
2. Within twelve hours the fundus may be approximately one centimeter above the umbilicus
3. The fundus descends about one to two centimeters every twenty-four hours, on day six; the fundus is in the middle between symphysis pubis and umbilicus. Four to twelve days after birth, uterus is not usually palpable.

This physiological phenomenon is brought about the process known as autolysis, during which the proteolytic enzymes digest the muscle fiber, which have increased during pregnancy to ten times their normal length and five times their normal thickness.

## ☆ **Lochia:**

The amount and duration of lochia “postpartum vaginal discharge” correlate with endometrial healing and regeneration.

### ☞ ***Stages of Lochia:***

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Usual Duration</i>	<i>Description</i>
1. <i>Lochia rubra</i>	1-4 days postpartum	Primarily contains blood & decidual tissue. May have a slight fleshy odor

2. <i>Lochia serosa</i>	5-7 days postpartum	Contains serous fluid, decidual tissue, leukocytes, & erythrocytes. Appears pink-brown. It is serous and odorless.
3. <i>Lochia alba</i>	1-3 weeks postpartum	Primarily contains leukocytes & decidual cells. Appears creamy white, brown or almost colorless. May have a slightly stale odor.

☆ **Health Education for Postpartum Mothers:**

**A. Rest:**

1. Get plenty of rest for a couple of weeks after birth.
2. Try to rest when the baby is sleeping
3. Limit visitors to relatives and close friends. Make sure everyone washes his or her hands before touching the baby to prevent the spread of infection.
4. Remember, fatigue decreases your milk supply and your ability to cope with new and added responsibilities.

**B. Activity:**

1. Limit stair climbing for the first week.
2. Resume your normal activity and exercise very gradually over 6 weeks.
3. Sleep on your side and 1 hour on the abdomen, no dorsal position to prevent displacement.

**C. Diet:**

1. Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water per day.
2. Eat plenty of proteins, fruits, and vegetables and drink plenty of milk.
3. A small bowl of bran daily will prevent constipation.
4. Ask your primary care provider if you should continue taking prenatal vitamins daily.

**D. Intercourse:**

1. Breastfeeding mothers may ovulate before their first menstrual period; therefore, it is possible to get pregnant even before menstruation has resumed.
2. Foam and condoms will provide contraception if sexual activity is resumed before 6 weeks postpartum.
3. Birth control should be discussed at the 6-week postpartum visit.

**E. Baths and Showers:**

1. You must shower as necessary but DO NOT take a tub bath for at least 3 days unless otherwise instructed by OB care provider. DO NOT use bubble baths or oils in bath water.
2. Warm showers may help to relieve the discomfort or breast engorgement.
3. DO NOT USE DOUCHES! They can cause trauma and possible infection.

**F. Postpartum Blues:**

1. Woman may experience “postpartum blues” during the first 10 days postpartum. The most common symptom is unexpected and unexplainable crying. She also may feel irritable.
2. Postpartum blues usually go away in about 72 hours, but may continue for as long as 10 days.
3. A woman may experience postpartum depression if the postpartum blue symptoms persist or increase in severity after 10 days.
4. Post partum depression is experience by 10% of all women and may occur anywhere within 6 months after delivery.
5. *Signs & symptoms of postpartum depression may include any or all of the following;*
  - i. *Sleep disturbance*
  - ii. *Loss of appetite*
  - iii. *Fear and anxiety*
  - iv. *Hopelessness*
  - v. *Hostility or self-blame*
  - vi. *Difficulty concentration or making decisions*

6. Woman should seek professional help if signs and symptoms of postpartum depression are experienced.

☆ **Minor Discomfort during Postpartum:**

Discomfort and pain interfere with the mother's physiologic and psychological restoration and divert energy from other areas.

***A. Uterine discomfort "After pain":***

Periodic uterine contraction during the first 2-3 days postpartum, it is similar to those accompanied by menstrual cycle. After pain is common lactating mothers and in multipara

☞ *Health Education:*

1. Encouraging relaxation and breathing exercises.
2. Ordering analgesics
3. Bladder should be kept empty.
4. The mother should lie in a comfortable position on her abdomen.
5. Uterus massage.
6. Mother is advised not to use hot water bottles.

***B. Mastitis:***

☞ *Treatment and Management:*

1. Analgesics.
2. Provide warm compresses to reddened areas.
3. Tell the mother to continue nursing.
4. The mother should wear a well-fitting nursing bra at all times.
5. Massage the breast, and express some milk from it to soften the breast so that the infant can catch on it.

***C. Perineal Discomfort & Episiotomy Care:***

☞ *Treatment & Prevention:*

1. Sitz baths with salt promote healing by increasing circulation to the area and promote comfort by relaxing the tissues and decreasing edema. Sitz baths are advised twice a day, starting 24 hours after delivery.

2. Advice mothers to change perineal pads frequently to maintain cleanliness. Pads should be worn snugly to avoid friction and irritation.
3. Encourage the woman to tighten her buttocks before sitting to decrease the pressure and tension on the perineal area.
4. If the pain is severe, administer analgesics (paracetamol, ibuprofen) and topical anesthetics as ordered.
5. Avoid using codeine as it causes constipation.
6. Use dry heat lamp (20-40 Watts, distance 30-50 cm) twice daily for 15-20 minutes. This helps to; dry the area, improve circulation, thus increasing the chances of healing and relieves the pain.

***D. Constipation:***

1. Adequate fluid intake.
2. Adequate fibrous food (fruits and vegetables)
3. Establishing a habit time
4. Increase grain intake to at least six times a day.
5. Increase exercises.

***E. Sub Involution:***

It is the delay in the return back of the uterus to its normal position.

***1. Causes:***

- i. Presence of part of the placenta or membrane
- ii. Presence of infection
- iii. Full bladder
- iv. Delay ambulation

***2. Intervention:***

- i. Early ambulation
- ii. Empty bladder
- iii. Early detection of signs and symptoms of infections
- iv. Uterine massage
- v. Medication to stimulate uterine contraction

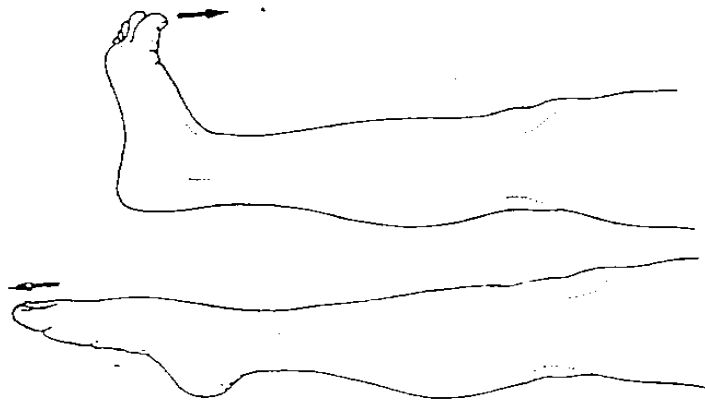
☆ **Postpartum Exercises:**

***A. The Importance of Post Partum Exercise:***

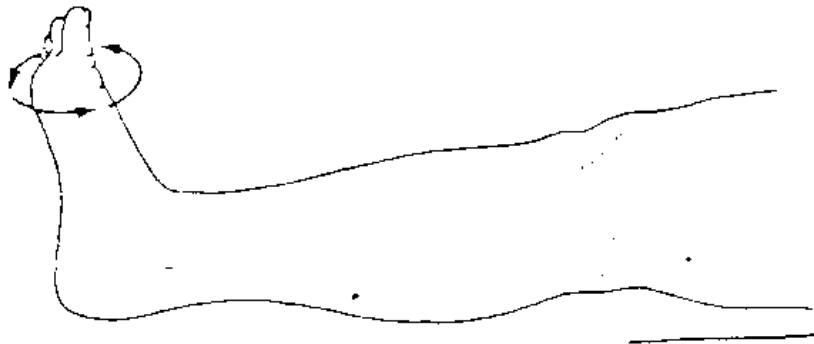
1. To improve circulation
2. Prevent deep vein thrombosis and reduce edema.
3. Improve lactation and support breast tissues.
4. To prevent uterine prolaps and displacement
5. Help in reduce mother's weight to her weight before pregnancy.

***B. Type of Postnatal Exercise:***

1. *Breathing Exercises:* (Preoperative & immediately postnatal period)
  - i. Instruct the mother to take a gentle breath through the mouth.
  - ii. Instruct the mother to breathe out gently and completely.
  - iii. Let her take a deep breathe through the nose and mouth. Holds this breath to the count of five
  - iv. Let her to exhale through the nose and mouth.
2. *Leg Exercise:* (Postoperative and immediate postnatal period)
  - i. Have her lie in semi-fowler's position when performing leg exercises to improve peripheral circulation, prevent thrombus formation, and strengthen muscles.
  - ii. Instruct her to extend the foot toward the bottom of the bed, and then flex it toward the face. Repeat it



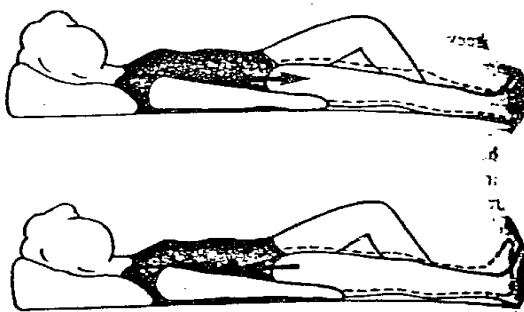
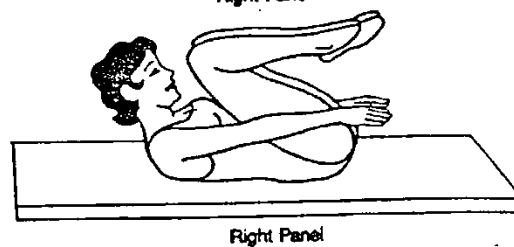
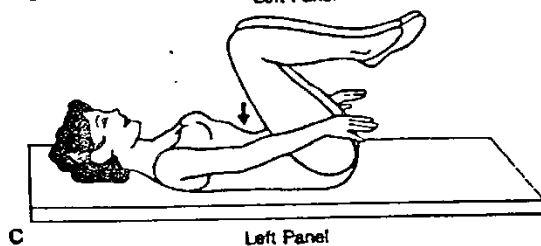
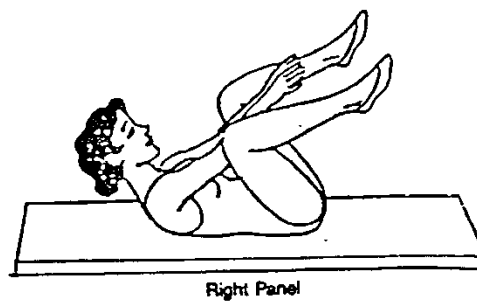
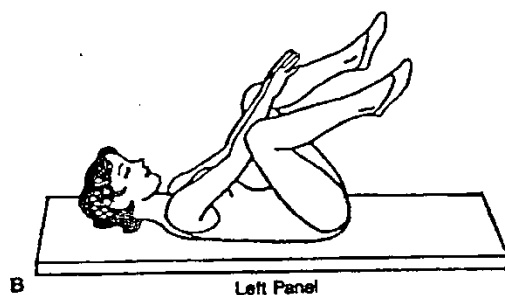
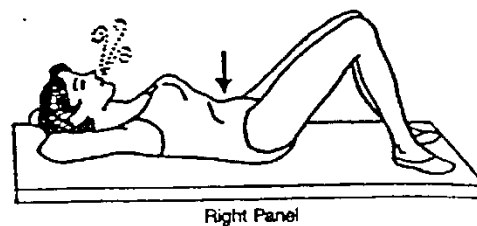
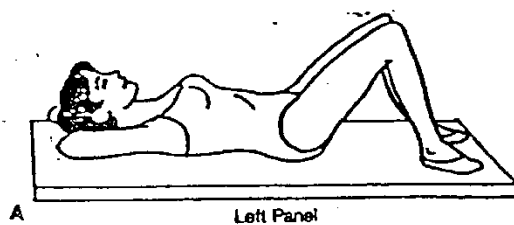
- iii. Instruct her to make circles with the ankles. First to the left, then to the right. Repeat it several times.



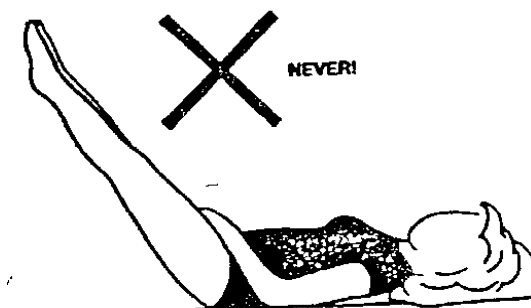
3. *Kegel's Exercises: (On the first day postnatal)*

- i. Instruct the mother to tighten or contract the perineal muscles by pressing the buttocks together.
- ii. Hold in this position for a moment, and then relax.
- iii. The mother is instructed to do the exercise several times a day, 20-30 times at each occasion.

4. Abdominal Exercise: (After 4 weeks postnatal)

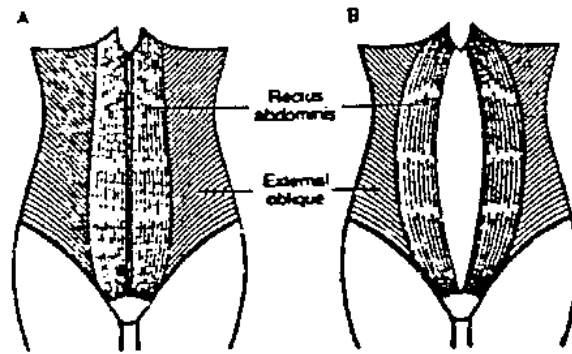


Hip hitching (up-drawing) exercise.

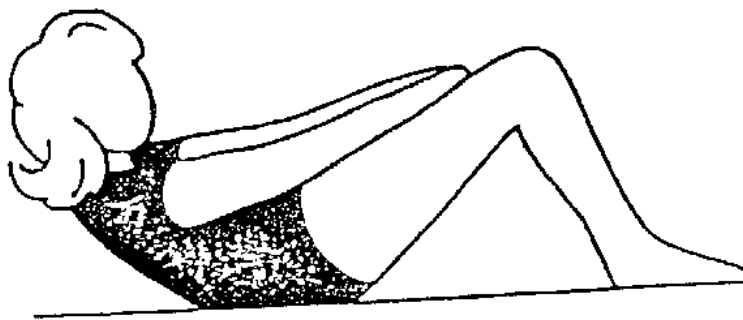


Never attempt double leg lifts.





(A) Rectus muscles before pregnancy. (B) Diastasis of rectus muscles after delivery.



Curl-up exercise.