

A Woman's Output After Giving Birth



Passing large quantities of urine in the first 24-48 hours and no bowel movements during the first 2-3 days after you have given birth is quite normal. Because of the increased urine output, reduced exercise and possibly being afraid to go to the toilet due to a perineal wound, it is quite common for you to become constipated after the birth of your baby. Read this handout to know what normal micturition and bowel movements are in the first days post partum and how to prevent constipation.

Micturition

Plasma volume increases to about 50% above non-pregnant values towards the end of pregnancy. Plasma volume will return to normal values after the birth of the baby. Excess fluid will be excreted, resulting in increased urine output in the first two days after birth. A full bladder prevents the uterus from contracting. It is therefore important to try and pass urine as soon as possible after delivery and then continue to empty the bladder frequently (every 3-4 hours). Let your midwife or doctor know if you haven't been able to pass urine 6-8 hours after delivery or if you only pass small amounts of urine. If you have a perineal wound, passing urine may cause a stinging sensation. Rinsing the vulva with lukewarm water whilst passing urine may help reduce this discomfort. Inform your doctor if passing urine is painful.

Bowel Movements

During the birth of the baby, pressure on the rectum causes your bowels to be emptied. It is therefore quite normal that you don't have any bowel movements in the first 2-3 days after the birth. If you haven't had a bowel movement by the fourth or fifth day post partum, please inform your doctor or midwife.

Prevent Constipation

Because of the increased urine output, reduced exercise and possibly being afraid to go to the toilet due to a perineal wound, it is quite common for you to become constipated after the birth of your baby. Below is some advice to prevent constipation:

- Drink plenty of fluids (about eight cups per day. Your urine should be light yellow)
- Eat foods rich in fibres. Fibres help with digestion and prevent constipation. Whole grains, nuts, seeds, fruit and vegetables (such as pears, grapes, plums, figs, dates, strawberries, oranges and dried fruit) all contain fibres.
- Exercise
- Drink a glass of lukewarm water (add one spoon of olive oil) before breakfast and before going to bed
- If you have a perineal wound and are afraid to go to the toilet, cover your wound with a pad. This might give you peace of mind.

Please be aware that the information provided is intended solely for general educational and informational purposes only. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician for any questions you may have regarding your medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have received in this program.