

Postnatal Discharge Medicines

When you leave hospital

When you leave hospital, you may still be a bit uncomfortable. Here is a list of possible problems that you may have and some medicines that may help. Remember that advice from your doctor, midwife, pharmacist or physiotherapist should be followed. All medicines mentioned in this leaflet are safe to use in breastfeeding, but there are some cautions with oxycodone and tramadol (see later).

1. Pain and discomfort

Every day you should feel a bit better. If the pain persists or seems to get worse, go to the WCH Women's Assessment Service or your local GP for a check-up.

Back pain

This may be from the pregnancy or may sometimes occur after an epidural or spinal injection. This can be made worse by bad posture, especially when breastfeeding. Make sure your posture and support are good when breastfeeding – ask your midwife for help. Hot packs/wheat bags may be helpful and the physiotherapist can offer some good exercises.

Pain from caesarean section, perineal and after birth pains

Areas around the vagina and stitches can still be sore. After-birth pains due to the uterus going back to its pre-pregnancy size can last for several days after going home.

2. Pain-relieving medicines

Paracetamol

When used regularly, paracetamol can provide good pain control. Regular dosing is recommended for the first 24 to 48 hours after going home.

Many medicines that you can buy contain paracetamol, so ensure that you take no more than 8 tablets/capsules containing paracetamol per day.

Anti-inflammatories

These may help to reduce pain due to inflammation and swelling. Be aware that these may cause stomach ache or dizziness. If concerned, consult your doctor. If you suffer from any of the following conditions, check first with your doctor or pharmacist before using anti-inflammatories: asthma, stomach ulcers, heartburn or indigestion, kidney problems, high blood pressure or bleeding problems.

Strong pain-relieving medicines – Oxycodone and Tramadol

This may be given to you to relieve more severe pain. Using oxycodone **OR** tramadol with regular paracetamol and anti-inflammatories can help you manage your pain. The dose will be prescribed by your doctor.

Both oxycodone and tramadol may cause constipation and make you feel drowsy.

You should not sleep with your baby in the same bed. This is very important if you are taking a medicine that could make you drowsy.

You should also take extra care when looking after your baby if you are taking any medicine that could make you drowsy.

If you or your baby are very sleepy or having trouble staying awake, stop taking oxycodone or tramadol and contact the emergency department of your nearest hospital.

If you need to take regular doses of strong pain relievers for more than four days in a row, it is best to have yourself and your baby checked by your local doctor or Child and Youth Health nurse.

3. Stinging when urinating

Urine is slightly acidic and can sting tender areas until they have healed. Drink plenty of water each day to dilute the urine. A urinary alkaliniser (e.g. Ural[®], Uracol[®], Citravescent[®]) can help to reduce stinging.

4. Constipation

Prevention is better than cure! Pregnancy hormones, reduced food intake, medicines and the need for bed rest in the early postnatal period may all cause sluggish bowels. It is important to keep stools soft if you have had a tear or an episiotomy with stitches after a vaginal delivery.

Drink plenty of water each day and eat a high-fibre diet with plenty of fruit, vegetables and whole grains.

Do some gentle walking around the house to help bowels start moving.

Products to prevent and manage constipation

Soluble fibre supplements such as psyllium husks are bulk-forming and they encourage softer stools which are easier to pass. Take regular doses and drink plenty of water for these to work properly. Examples: Metamucil[®], Fybogel[®], Benefiber[®].

Stool softeners are the next option and are gentle laxatives that draw water into the bowel to lubricate and soften stools to make them easier to pass. Example: docusate (Coloxyl[®]) tablets

Osmotic laxatives are another laxative that draws water into the bowel and softens the stool. Examples: lactulose (Actilax[®]) liquid.

For more severe constipation consult your

GP.

5. Anaemia

This can occur in pregnancy or possibly due to blood loss during labour. Your blood may be checked for this by measuring your haemoglobin level. Haemoglobin in red blood cells carries oxygen around the body. If the haemoglobin level is low, it can lead to tiredness and a lack of energy. Your doctor may suggest taking an iron supplement to increase your haemoglobin level.

Iron is best absorbed on an empty stomach but if stomach irritation occurs, take it with food.

Iron may cause constipation and can cause dark stools. Examples: Ferrogradumet[®], Ferrograd C[®], Maltofer[®], Ferro-tab[®], Ferro-liquid[®], FGF^{*®}, Fefol^{*®} Ferro F^{*®} (*these also contain folic acid).

6. Vitamin D deficiency

Vitamin D deficiency is a low level of vitamin D in your blood (diagnosed with a blood test). Vitamin D keeps your bones healthy and strong by controlling the level of calcium in the blood. If you have been taking vitamin D supplements throughout your pregnancy and up until delivery, continue to do so after birth unless advised by a health professional. Vitamin D level testing can be arranged by your local doctor.

Important Information

Keep medicines out of reach of children. In case of overdose or poisoning, contact:

**The Poisons Information Centre on
13 11 26 (24 hour service)**

For more information

SA Pharmacy Medicines Information Service

Women's and Children's Hospital

Phone: (08) 8161 7555 (9am – 5pm Weekdays)

Email: medinfo@sa.gov.au

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