



# Whole Body Healing

**D**uring the six-week period after giving birth, your body undergoes immense changes. It can take 10 to 12 months before you feel completely back to your prepregnancy strength and health.

- You may lose 15 to 20 pounds of the weight that you gained during your pregnancy.
- Your body will try to shed the 5 pounds of extra fluid you gained through increased urination or “night sweats,” when you wake in the middle of the night with your sheets soaked. This is normal as long as it’s not accompanied by a fever.
- You may experience hair loss from your head or pubic area two to six months after your baby’s birth due to the change in hormones. But new hair will quickly replace it.

## Cramping

The first day after delivery, you’ll probably look five or six months pregnant. Contractions will decrease the size of the uterus so that by six weeks, it’ll be its normal size again. You’ll generally feel “afterpains” the first few days after delivery. Walking, deep breathing, relaxation and frequent emptying of your bladder, along with some simple pain medication, will reduce the discomfort.

## Bleeding

During pregnancy, your blood volume is increased by half. During the first weeks after birth, the extra blood—called lochia—is expelled. It begins bright red, much like your period. It will lessen to a pinkish-brown color and finally a creamy yellow. The changes in the lochia usually occur over two to six weeks. The amount of lochia discharged decreases daily. If you notice an increase in blood flow after being active, you may be overdoing it.

## First Period

If you’re breast-feeding, your period may not return for three months or longer. This does not mean you can’t get pregnant. It’s hard to tell when you’ll begin ovulating again. Once you have your doctor’s OK to resume intercourse, be aware that you can become pregnant again. When you do get your first period, it may be heavier or lighter than normal.

## Caesarean Recovery

If you deliver by Caesarean, it’s important to remember you’ve been through major surgery. Your body requires up to eight weeks for proper healing. You’ll experience the same recovery symptoms as from a vaginal birth, with the added discomfort of stitches and less mobility.

## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Rest. Take two naps each day.
- Avoid heavy lifting.
- Avoid long car rides for the first few weeks.
- It’s normal to feel some depression the first few days after delivery. If you can’t shake the depression or it becomes worse, call your doctor.
- Take your temperature at least twice a day. Watch for any signs of fever.
- Wait at least three weeks after a vaginal delivery before having intercourse.
- Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Eat lots of fiber and keep fat to a minimum.
- Drink at least eight glasses of water each day.
- Wait at least a week before beginning any exercise program.
- Kegal exercises help your perineal return to normal and strengthen the abdominal wall.