

Postpartum



ARTICLE

## Postpartum Bleeding: What to Expect and How to Manage It

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# discharge from your vagina at all.

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**to read**

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Postpartum bleeding is one of the changes to your body after childbirth you won't really expect. After nine months of pregnancy and a period-free, well period, it can feel strange to have any discharge from your vagina at all. So for some women, when postpartum bleeding occurs, it can be a shock to see bleeding like an overflowing dam. But fear not moms, this postpartum bleeding isn't some weird condition that's occurring out of the blue. In fact, it happens to all women who give birth.

## **The Mysterious Lochia**

After birth, you will experience a vaginal discharge of blood, mucus and tissue. This is known as lochia. Though it may seem like a scary process, and feel like you're bleeding dry, it is simply happening because the site where the placenta was attached is healing. The process takes anywhere from one to six weeks after birth, so there's nothing to worry about.

For the first few days after birth, the lochia will be bright red and look like a heavy period. You'll have a little less discharge each day, and the lochia will turn pale pink, and then yellow-white.

## **What can I do?**

Here are a few things to note when managing your lochia.

- Use only sanitary napkins for at least six weeks after delivery. You can get those larger heavy-duty ones, and switch to minipads when the lochia tapers off.
- Tampons are a no, unless you're happy to introduce bacteria into your uterus. And get an infection as your reward.
- Get the rest you need and avoid excess standing and walking. You can use this as an excuse to get help from your partner for the house chores.
- A full bladder will make it difficult for your uterus to contract and heal, so make frequent visits to the loo.

## **How do I know if there's something wrong?**

Most of the time, lochia is nothing much to worry about. On the other hand, you should contact your healthcare professional if any of the following occurs when there's postpartum bleeding:

- The flow becomes bright red after a week. If it turns brown, and then turns red suddenly, it may mean your uterus isn't healing.
- A continuous discharge or a discharge that smells bad may be a sign of an incomplete healing of the cervix, or vaginal infection.
- Abnormal heavy bleeding, especially if you are soaking more than two pads in half an hour.

If you've just given birth, lochia is nothing to stress yourself over. You have more pressing matters to attend to, like experiencing the joy of holding your newborn baby or watching him or her sleep. If you

feel uncomfortable about postpartum bleeding, or if you need advice, you can always contact your healthcare professional.