



BABY IS HERE!

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE STORK LEAVES? AFTER 9 MONTHS OF PREGNANCY, AND many hours of labour, your baby has finally arrived! The perfect gift is here, but are you prepared for what will happen over the next few days? Questions mothers worry about include: Will I have enough milk for the baby? Will I return to my pre-pregnancy size? Now that the baby is finally out, will I be able to get some proper sleep at last?

In the mother's womb, baby receives nutrients and oxygen from the mother's blood and waste products are likewise moved via the mother's blood to be removed by her liver and kidneys. The first breath the baby takes expands the lungs to begin providing oxygen to the baby. The organs all start functioning. The baby needs to feed, digest the milk and start producing urine and faeces. The adjustment from life inside the womb to an independent life is hard work and the baby tends to sleep a lot in the first 24 hours. Don't get too worried if the baby appears quiet on Day 1 of life, they will be quite different thereafter and will serve as your alarm clock for the next one year!

Mothers know that breast milk is the best for the baby unless there are specific reasons why they should not breastfeed. Milk production is initiated by the hormone Prolactin which is produced by the Pituitary gland located in the brain. Within a few hours of delivery of the placenta and when the baby starts to suckle, Prolactin will increase, and the milk will come in about 48 hours later. For the first 2 days, the breasts produce colostrum, which is more concentrated than milk but produced only in small quantity. The colostrum contains leucocytes which protect the baby against harmful bacteria and viruses; secretory immunoglobulins (IgA) which protects the lining membranes of the throat, lungs and intestines. There is a special component in colostrum called growth modulators which helps premature babies accept oral feed better than if they were given formula feed.

After months of discomfort during pregnancy, most mothers thought that once baby is delivered everything would be back to normal. They are often surprised that their tummy still looks so big. Once baby is delivered, the uterus (womb) contracts and will be at the level just below the umbilicus. The womb contracts to prevent massive bleeding and it takes six weeks for the uterus to return to the original size, this may present as painful cramps. Those who had a vaginal delivery often have an episiotomy or perineal tear which would feel a little sore especially when sitting, while those who had a Caesarean section will experience pain at the wound site when moving. Analgesia or pain-killers are always prescribed for the cramps and for the wound or perineal pain, and these are safe for breastfeeding, so do take them and be more comfortable.

Most mothers do not get good quality sleep in the last few months of pregnancy due to the discomfort of the enlarged uterus; frequent urination at night and the associated backache and leg cramps. Followed by long hours of labour and a high level of anxiety, it is not surprising that by this time most mothers are quite tired. However, the euphoria of having the baby may keep them from getting any sleep that first night. Tiredness and sudden drop in the pregnancy hormones may contribute to the feeling of postnatal blues experienced by majority of mothers. It is therefore imperative to ensure adequate rest, hydration and nutrition after delivery. Good support from healthcare staff and family members are important to help new mothers cope with care of the baby and breastfeeding, enabling most mothers to settle into their new role. However, in 3-5% of mothers, the symptoms of depression may persist beyond two weeks and will require treatment by a psychiatrist for the more severe condition of postnatal depression.

Motherhood starts when one gets pregnant but reality sets in when the baby arrives. Enjoy the new exciting journey of motherhood with your baby, accept all the help from family members, sleep when your baby sleeps. A happy mummy will make for a happy baby as they feel more relax and comfortable! ■



DR CHEN CHERN YI | OBSTETRICIAN & GYNAECOLOGIST

MBSS (Singapore), MRCOG (UK), FAMS (Singapore)

HealthCare For Women

Blk 106A Punggol Field #01-546. Tel: 6315 5035

www.healthcareforwomen.com.sg