

# Losing your baby

## Taking care of yourself after the delivery



This fact sheet gives you important information to take good care of yourself over the coming weeks. In this fact sheet, you'll find the signs to look out for and the resources that could be useful to you.

### When will the labour pains stop?

They diminish over time and usually go away within a few days. If you've had stitches, the area may remain tender for a few weeks. If you've had a C-section, the pain may also last for a few weeks.

If you've been prescribed pain medication, take it as prescribed.

Otherwise, a painkiller such as acetaminophen (Tylenol, for example) or an anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin, for example) can relieve your pain after you get home. These medications are sold in pharmacies. You can take them as needed.



### Should I be worried about bleeding?

You'll have blood loss (lochia) similar to your periods. It will be light red at first, then pinkish, brown and, finally, yellowish. It should gradually diminish over time.

It could stop after 10 days, or it could last up to 6 weeks. Slightly heavier bleeding could be normal.

However, it shouldn't fill more than one sanitary pad per hour. It can also be normal to pass blood clots.

### When will my periods start up again?

Your cycle will gradually recover, and your periods should return 3 to 6 weeks after your delivery. It is advisable to wait at least 2 weeks before having sex with penetration.



## How can I help my perineum to heal?

Here are some tips to follow over the next few days.

- > Take a shower or bath every day. Don't use any products (oil, bubble bath, etc.) for at least 2 weeks.
- > Don't use a tampon or a menstrual cup for at least 2 weeks.
- > Wash your vulva with warm water and unscented soap after every bowel movement and at least twice a day.
- > Dry yourself by tapping gently from front to back.
- > For your comfort, or to relieve any itching, wash the perineum in cold water for 10 to 15 minutes.
- > Don't swim in a lake or pool or bathe in a spa for at least 2 weeks.
- > Don't use a vaginal douche (you should never do this).
- > **If you have a wound (stitches), the healing will take longer:** no product in the bath, no tampon, and no swimming for at least 6 weeks.



**Resume your normal activities gradually. But avoid any strenuous effort for about 2 weeks.**

## What should I do when my milk comes in?

Milk production generally begins 3 days after giving birth. If you avoid stimulating your breasts, milk production will gradually stop on its own.

If your breasts are sore, here are some tips that could help:

- > Wear a good bra day and night.
- > Take a pain medication (such as Tylenol) or an anti-inflammatory (such as Advil or Motrin).
- > You can also apply cold. For example, apply cold compresses or an ice pack for 20 minutes (placing a cloth between the bag and your skin).

To discourage milk production:

- Don't direct the shower spray at your breasts.
- Pump milk only if the breast hardens, enlarges, and becomes tender, or even painful. In that case, pumping helps prevent an infection in the breast (mastitis).

**Some women prefer to avoid having the milk come in.** If this is your choice, take your prescribed medication within 24 to 48 hours of the delivery.

## Can I donate my breast milk?

Yes, it's possible to donate it to Héma-Québec. This organization manages a breast milk bank. The milk collected is mainly used for premature babies. If you're interested in this, see the contact information in the Useful Resources at the end of this sheet.





### What signs should I look out for?

If you have any of the following symptoms within the first 7 days after delivery, call the CHUM's obstetric triage. After 7 days, go to the emergency room or see your doctor.

- Heavy bleeding (needing 1 sanitary pad per hour) for 2 consecutive hours.
- Bleeding with blood clots that are larger than a golf ball.
- Severe abdominal or genital pain that gets worse despite care.
- Blood loss that smells bad.
- Leg pain with swelling.
- Breathing problems.
- Fever of 38°C (100.4°F) or higher.



### How will I be followed up?

You'll have an appointment with your family doctor about 6 to 10 weeks after delivery, to go over the events.

You'll also have one at a preconception clinic 3 to 4 months after delivery, for follow-up on test results and the autopsy, if one was done. It may seem like a long time, but it's the time it takes to get all the reports.

### When can we have sex again?

It depends on each couple. It's advisable to wait at least 2 weeks (or 6 if you have stitches) before having sex with penetration. The scarring of the perineum and your bereavement can also have an impact. Talk about it as a couple and decide together on the ideal time. The important thing is to listen to yourself.

### Can I get pregnant again?

Wait at least 2 cycles before attempting a new pregnancy. This gives your body time to recover. Until then, use an effective birth control method. In anticipation of a new pregnancy, also take vitamin B9 (folic acid). This reduces the risk of your next baby having a neural tube defect.

## Can I get parental leave?

That depends on the stage of your pregnancy and your work situation. To find out more, consult the Appendix on page 5.

## Who can I contact if I have questions?

- For any question related to your health: Don't hesitate to talk with a healthcare professional about any worries or concerns. Within 7 days after your delivery, you can contact the **CHUM's obstetric triage**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at:

> **514 890-8326**

- For questions related to decisions to be made: you can contact the assistant head nurse of the delivery room at any time.

> **514 890-8000, ext. 33775**

> **[papillon.envolee.chum@ssss.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:papillon.envolee.chum@ssss.gouv.qc.ca)**

- For psychological support:

Name: .....

> **514 890-8000, ext. ....**

- To retrieve your child's body, call the Death Follow-up Service at the Admissions Department at:

> **514 890-8000, ext. 11661**



## USEFUL RESOURCES

Health fact sheets:

[\*Losing your baby - The delivery and the decisions to be taken\*](#) (French only)

[\*Losing your baby - Perinatal bereavement\*](#)

Héma-Québec Public Mothers' Milk Bank:

> 1 800 565-6635

> **[hema-quebec.qc.ca/index.en.html](http://hema-quebec.qc.ca/index.en.html)**

Click on Donors → Mother's Milk

Québec parental insurance plan

> 1 888 610-7727

> **[rqap.gouv.qc.ca/en](http://rqap.gouv.qc.ca/en)**

Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST) :

> **1 844 838-0808**

> **[cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/en](http://cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/en)**

A Government of Canada Employment Insurance

> 1 800 808-6352

> **[canada.ca/](http://canada.ca/)**

Click on Benefits → Employment insurance benefits and leave → Maternity and parental benefits

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our website

**[chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante](http://chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante)**

*The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.*

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal

**[chumontreal.qc.ca](http://chumontreal.qc.ca)**

Here is some general information about parental leave benefits. To obtain the information that applies to you, we advise you to contact the resources indicated.

### If the pregnancy ends **AFTER** 19 weeks (19 weeks plus 1 day or more)

The mother is entitled to maternity benefits under the Québec Parental Insurance Plan for 15 to 18 weeks. The father is not entitled to any paternity benefits, but a doctor can sign a medical certificate for parental leave.

The CNESST also provides, for both parents, a 5-day leave within 15 days following the end of the pregnancy. This does not apply to self-employed workers.

### If the pregnancy ends at 19 weeks or **BEFORE**

The mother is entitled to 3 weeks of sick leave without pay. Employer-sponsored salary insurance may apply. If not, the mother can apply for employment insurance benefits from the federal government.

To prolong the mother's absence or to allow for the father's absence, a family doctor must be consulted. Depending on the assessment, the doctor could sign a medical certificate for sick leave.

### If the baby is born with signs of life

Reduced maternity and paternity leave under the Québec Parental Insurance Plan may apply.



See the Useful Resources section on page 4 for contact information.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal  
[chumontreal.qc.ca](http://chumontreal.qc.ca)





## Questions

Write down any questions you want to ask your care team so you don't forget anything.



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## Observations - Comments

Write down observations you feel are important: your symptoms, treatments, follow-up, energy level, spirit, etc.



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## Resource people and contacts

Write down phone numbers, email addresses and websites that could be useful.



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