



# Healing After Birth

## *The Baby Moon*

After giving birth you may feel as tired and sore as if you have just run a marathon--and you did! This handout will give you some ideas of how to care for your body and encourage healing. The first weeks after birth are sometimes called the "Baby Moon," a special time to rest, heal, and start falling in love with your new baby.

## *Rest and Recovery*

Make sure you are getting enough rest--this is crucial! It is normal for newborn babies to wake frequently to feed, and most new parents cannot get enough sleep through an 8-hour night. You will need to take naps during the day as well. Follow the old adage and "sleep when the baby sleeps." If you have numerous family members and friends coming by throughout the day to greet your new baby, you will not get enough rest. Consider implementing visiting hours so that all your visitors come for an hour or two once a day. You may also want to spend a few days together without any visitors.

## *Good Food and Plenty of Water*

Adequate water intake and good nutrition will help support your body's healing process. Have healthy snacks and finger foods on hand, and ask for meals if you have friends and family offering help. Every time you sit down to feed the baby, have a glass or bottle of water to ensure you are well hydrated. Your nutritional needs when breastfeeding are similar to when you are pregnant. We recommend continuing your prenatal vitamins as long as you are breastfeeding, especially if you have had low Iron.

## *Build Healthy Flora*

Antibiotics work by getting rid of unwanted bacteria, but also wipe out beneficial flora in your body. If you have had antibiotics during labour, you may be more susceptible to yeast infections. Help rebuild your healthy flora by taking acidophilus or probiotics. These may be found at health food or vitamin shops.

## *Emotional Balance*

Late pregnancy, birth, lack of sleep, learning to breastfeed, a crying baby...all of these can take a toll on your emotional state. If you are feeling depressed, exhausted, or that you can't cope, your midwife or public health nurse can connect you with community resources. Postpartum doulas can help with breastfeeding and household chores, and don't forget to accept help from friends and relatives that offer! Having someone hold a baby after you have fed him or her, can allow you a shower or nap that can make you feel like a new woman.

## *Perineal Healing*

If you have had a tear or stitches, be very careful in the first couple of weeks. Minimize or eliminate climbing stairs, climbing up into high vehicles or beds, and any heavy lifting or chores such as laundry or vacuuming. All of these activities put strain on the perineum and can pull out stitches or impair healing. A little extra caution in the short term will pay off with faster healing. The good news is that your perineum will heal well if you take a little care.

You may take Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen for pain if needed. Talk to your midwife about dosage. Ice packs work well immediately after birth, but are not beneficial after the first 24 hours. You can make your own perineal ice packs by spritzing water or witch hazel onto menstrual pads and putting them in the freezer.

Witch hazel on a menstrual pad, or a makeup remover pad, is a great compress for hemorrhoids.

Taking Sitz baths can help to heal tears, stitches, or hemorrhoids. You can follow one of the recipes below, or ask your midwife for Willow's premixed perineal healing herbal blend.

### *Sitz Bath Instructions:*

Try to soak in your sitz bath once a day for at least the first week after your birth. You can either soak in a few inches of water in your bath tub, or you can buy a plastic Sitz bath (available at pharmacies) that sits on the toilet.

To prepare your herbal infusion, place a couple of handfuls of the chosen herbal blend into a pot with a tight fitting lid. A handful is equal to about an ounce. You will need 1 litre (4 cups) of boiled water for every 1 ounce of herb blend used. Pour the boiled water into the pot and replace the lid. Steep as directed in recipe. After straining the mixture, herbs can be discarded or composted.

When you are ready to soak, heat up a few litres of any of the recipes below, ensuring that the infusion does not boil. The temperature should be quite warm, but not so hot that it would be uncomfortable to sit in.

Once it is at the desired temperature, pour the infusion into your bath tub or sitz bath. You can add cool water if necessary until you reach a comfortable temperature.

For greatest benefit, soak for at least 20 minutes, once or twice a day.

### *Recipe one:*

**1 ounce Uva Ursi**

**1-2 ounces Comfrey**

**1 ounce Shepherd's Purse**

**1 cup Sea Salt**

**1 bulb fresh Garlic**

Simmer the herbs for 20-30 minutes in a big pot of water, then strain. If you have fresh Comfrey from the garden, do not simmer, but use it raw by grinding in a blender, straining, then adding to the tea mixture.

Blend the fresh garlic the same way, then add this and the Sea Salt to the tea. Keep in a covered container and add to warm water in your Sitz bath. If keeping for more than 2 days, keep in freezer.

### *Recipe two:*

**Mix equal parts of dried:**

**Calendula Flowers**

**Chamomile**

**Chickweed**

**Plantain Leaves**

Simmer for 20 to 30 minutes. Add this tea to a warm Sitz bath with half a cup of **Sea Salt** and a cheesecloth bag containing a crushed head of **Garlic**.

### *Recipe three:*

Mix together 3 ounces of the following herbs:

- **Uva Ursi**
- **Comfrey Leaf**
- **Yarrow Flowers**
- **Calendula Flowers**

- **a couple of handfuls of Epsom Salts**

Mix the herbs (not the Epsom salts) together in a large bowl. Place this blend into a jar or well-sealed plastic bag and store in a dark, cool, dry place until ready to use.

Let the infusion steep for half an hour to overnight. When the infusion is ready, pour it through cheesecloth or a tea strainer.

*For further information, please talk to your midwife. For information on herbs consult a Naturopath or Herbalist.*