

# Postnatal Information

**Congratulations on the birth of your baby. This leaflet explains what postnatal care you will receive and provides resources that can show you how to care for yourself and baby at home after birth. If you have any further questions, please speak to your Midwife, GP or Health Visitor.**

## St George's Maternity contact numbers

Once you are at home, if you have any concerns about you or your baby, you can contact your community midwife using the team number on the front of your discharge pack for non-urgent queries. You may need to leave a voicemail and they will get back to you when they return to their base.

If you have concerns that are urgent, you can call the Maternity Helpline to seek advice from a midwife on 020 8725 2777 or contact Gwillim Ward on 020 8725 2013.

Please **call 999 for urgent medical** attention if:

- Baby stops breathing or goes blue
- Has a fit or convulsion
- Has a rash that does not fade when you press it
- Vomits green fluid
- Is unresponsive / can't be woken up.

## Reasons to seek medical help for your baby

A baby's illness can become serious if left untreated. The following symptoms can help you decide whether you need to seek medical attention for your baby. Call the Maternity Helpline or your GP if:

- Your baby is less responsive, floppy or difficult to wake
- Pale all over
- Grunts with each breath
- Breathing faster than normal
- Not interested in feeding
- Passes much less urine than normal
- Has a bulging fontanelle (the soft spot at the top of your baby's head)
- Change in skin colour, i.e. yellow (jaundice)
- Has a high or low temperature or is sweating – feels hot or cold to touch
- Has blood in their stools or in the nappy
- If your baby is dehydrated – dry lips and sunken fontanelle.

## Reasons to seek medical help for yourself

If you experience any of the following, please come to Delivery Suite triage or call the maternity helpline on **020 8725 2777**:

- Severe headaches with or without visual disturbances
- Passing large clots or filling your sanitary pad in an hour with heavy bleeding
- Swelling or pain in your calves
- Offensive smell coming from your perineal stitches or C-section wound.

## What care will I receive?

Your community midwife, health visitor and GP will be informed that you have had your baby. You will be seen by a midwife either at home, in a clinic or will receive a telephone call the day after you have gone home / had your baby. If you do not hear from a midwife by 4pm the day after you have gone home, please call the community midwife team number on the front of your notes or the maternity helpline.



The midwife you see will depend on where you live and may not always be from St George's Hospital. You will be given the relevant contact numbers on your postnatal paperwork. The midwife will then inform you of planned future appointments. Your baby will be offered Newborn Blood Spot Screening, which must be taken when they are five days old (day of birth is day 0). Please search 'Screening Tests for You and Your Baby' or scan this QR code to access the information online (it is available in other languages too).

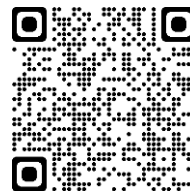
You will need to make a GP appointment for yourself at six weeks for a check-up. You will then need to make an additional GP appointment for your baby at eight weeks where your baby will receive another detailed examination. This is also when your baby's first recommended vaccinations will be due. Whilst we inform your GP that your baby has been born, you will need to register them as a patient at the GP practice.

## Registering your baby's birth



It is a legal requirement to register your baby's birth within 42 days. Any baby born at St George's Hospital must be registered at Wandsworth Registry Office. You need to make an appointment online and you will be advised on what you need to take for the registration.

Search 'Wandsworth Registry Office' online or scan the QR code.



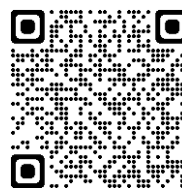
## Caring for your baby at home



New babies have a strong need to be close to their parents, as this helps them to feel secure and loved. This QR code will take you to the leaflet developed by UNICEF called 'Building a Happy Baby' which will provide you with invaluable information and guidance to get started.

## How to cope when your baby cries

Hearing your baby crying can be upsetting, frustrating and at times overwhelming. **ICON** provides useful information and support to parents on infant crying and how to cope and comfort your baby.



## Where can I get help with feeding my baby?



Please see the infant feeding information on our website by searching 'St George's Maternity Feeding Your Baby' or accessing this QR code.

The World Health Organisation recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and to continue to breastfeed until at least two years of age alongside family foods. Breastfeeding is a skill that takes time for both you and your baby to master and we recognise that the early weeks can be particularly challenging. Your midwives are here to support your learning and help you recognise when it is going well and when you may need additional support. You may choose to mix feed your baby (any combination of breastfeeding, expressed breastmilk or formula milk) or to feed them with formula milk exclusively – please see information below on responsive bottle feeding and speak to your midwife for individualised guidance around your feeding choices.

Once you have been discharged from hospital, your community midwife and health visitor will continue to support you with feeding your baby. If you continue to experience any feeding issues please contact the Infant Feeding Team on **07766 800 365** or email [infant.feeding@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:infant.feeding@stgeorges.nhs.uk) for more specialist support.

You can also access a wide variety of information on the UNICEF website by searching 'UNICEF Breastfeeding' or using this QR code.



## Feeding your baby milk from a bottle

If you choose to feed your baby milk from a bottle – whether it be expressed milk or first infant formula, it is very important to prepare the milk in the safest way possible. Please access the St George's Maternity 'Feeding Your Baby' page via the QR code above to see our guidance on cleaning / sterilising and making up feeds.

## How can I tell if my baby is getting enough milk?

Often the best way to tell is to monitor their wet and dirty nappies. This is a chart that you may find useful. If you are concerned, please ring the Maternity Helpline.

Nappies		
The contents of your baby's nappies will change during the first week. These changes will help you to know if feeding is going well. Speak to your midwife if you have any concerns.		
Baby's Age	Wet Nappies	Dirty Nappies
1-2 days old	1-2 per day	1 or more dark green 'tar like' meconium.
3-4 days old	3 or more per day	2 or more, changing in colour and consistency - brown / green / yellow, looser.
5-6 days old	5 or more and heavier	2 or more yellow, may be quite watery.
7- 28 days old	6 or more heavy	2 or more at least the size of a £2 coin. Watery 'seedy' appearance.

## Safe sleeping

The Lullaby Trust provides valuable information about safe sleeping and preventing Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Please access The Lullaby Trust information via this QR code.



The safest way to settle your baby to sleep is as follows:

- In a separate cot or Moses basket in the same room as you for the first six months, even during the day.
- Use a firm, flat, waterproof mattress with NO cushioned areas, pillows, quilts, duvets or bumpers.
- Don't use any pods, nests or sleep positioners.
- Always place your baby on their back for every sleep, with their feet at the bottom of the cot.

- Do not cover your baby's head or face while sleeping. Babies should not wear hats when inside.
- Try to maintain the room temperature between 16-20 degrees Celsius, ensuring baby is not too hot or cold.
- Never sleep with your baby on your chest or next to you on a sofa or armchair.
- If you or your partner smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs or are very tired, it is not advisable to share a bed with your baby as this can increase the risk of SIDS. Additionally, bed sharing is not advised if your baby is born prematurely (before 37 weeks) or has a low birth weight (less than 2.5kg / 5lbs 8oz).
- If you think your baby is unwell, always seek urgent medical advice.
- Breastfeeding your baby reduces the risk of SIDS.
- Ensuring your baby receives their routine course of vaccinations in their first year of life reduces the risk of SIDS.



## Help and emotional support after having a baby

Having a baby can be joyful, exciting and rewarding. However, it is also common for expectant and new parents to experience anxiety, depression or emotional distress.

As many as one in five people experiences emotional difficulties during pregnancy and in the first year after their baby's birth. This can happen to anyone.

Every London borough has an IAPT service which offers free, confidential talking therapy for people who have symptoms of anxiety or depression. IAPT stands for "Improving Access to Psychological Therapy". IAPT gives priority to expectant and new parents.



This QR code will take you to a leaflet explaining more about the service and the help we can offer you if you need it, alternatively search 'London IAPT' online.



## Birth reflections

Sometimes following a birth, it is helpful to talk things through - either if things haven't gone the way you had expected or you just want to reflect on your experience. You can arrange to speak to a Professional Midwifery Advocate (PMA, a senior midwife at St George's) for a wide range of issues relating to your experience of pregnancy or birth. This is a listening service predominantly but PMAs can answer questions that may arise and follow up on any issues that will improve the quality of our maternity service.

You can contact them by telephone (leaving a message with your name and contact number): 020 8725 2042 or 07826 874 932 or by email: [pma@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pma@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

## Postnatal recovery



Your pelvic floor is a group of muscles at the base of the pelvis. They support your pelvis, help to control your bladder and bowel and play a role in sexual function. This QR code will guide you to the St George's Pelvic Health Physiotherapy Resources where you can find useful videos and the Postnatal Physiotherapy Advice leaflet. If you have further concerns or questions, you can contact the Pelvic Health Physiotherapy team on 020 8725 1333.

Pregnancy and birth can affect how you move and your bodily functions, such as bladder and bowels. Supporting your body during and after pregnancy is important. This QR code will take you to the GetUBetter app, an NHS approved app for support to recover, live and work well.



## Preventing blood clots

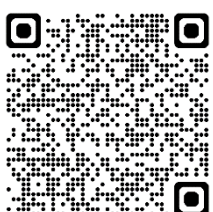
This information outlines the important things you or your carer should know about preventing blood clots in pregnancy and after giving birth. Here are the answers to some commonly asked questions. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your midwife.



## Caring for your perineum

Many vaginal births will lead some sort of tear, graze or episiotomy.

The chance of this can be higher if it is your first vaginal birth. This QR code will provide



some information that may be useful in addition to the advice below. If you have a tear or episiotomy, you will usually have stitches to repair it. Dissolvable stitches are used, so you do not need to return to hospital to have them removed. Most stitches should heal within one month of the birth.

It's common to feel some pain in your stitches and vagina after birth. To ease the pain or discomfort of a cut or tear, pain relief such as paracetamol and ibuprofen (unless you have been advised otherwise), are safe to use if you're breastfeeding. Placing a frozen maternity pad, ice pack or ice cubes wrapped in a towel on the cut or tear for around five minutes can also help ease discomfort. Avoid placing ice directly on your skin as this could cause damage. Pouring warm water over the outer area of your vagina as you pee may also help ease the discomfort.

It is important to keep the area of your stitches clean to prevent infection. It is preferable to shower instead of bathe whilst the wound is healing (at least four weeks). Soaking the wound for a long period can soften the scar tissue and inhibit healing. Shower daily, washing the area of your stitches gently with water only. Do not use any shower gels or any other creams or oils on the wound. After washing, gently pat the area dry with a towel or allow the area to dry naturally. Change your sanitary pad regularly throughout the day and night, even if it is not soiled.

Exposing the stitches to fresh air can help the healing process. Taking off your underwear and lying on a towel on your bed for around 10 minutes once or twice a day may help. Once any bleeding or discharge has settled, it may be helpful to leave your underwear off overnight to allow air to circulate.

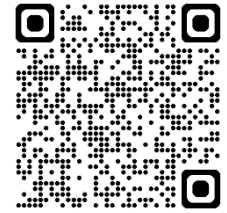
After using the toilet, pour warm water over your vaginal area to rinse it. When wiping your bottom, make sure you wipe gently from front to back. This will help prevent bacteria in your anus infecting the cut and surrounding tissue. Avoid constipation by drinking plenty of water and maintaining a healthy balanced diet including fruit and vegetables.

Strengthening the muscles around the vagina and anus by doing pelvic floor exercises can help with healing and will reduce the pressure on the wound and vaginal area.

If you experience one or more of the following, you may have an infection and should speak with your GP, community midwife or contact the Maternity Helpline:

- Increase in perineal pain (difficulty walking or sitting)
- Yellow or green vaginal discharge
- Stitches which are loose or separated
- Feeling unwell, or flu like symptoms such as a high temperature
- Burning sensation or pain around the wound site when passing urine
- Presence of redness, hardness, or swelling around the wound.

For some people, raised or itchy scar tissue forms around the place where a tear happened or where an episiotomy was performed. Scar massage may help to reduce sensitivity and / or pain, helping to prepare for return to sexual activities. This QR code will direct you to information specific to scar tissue management after birth.



If you are worried about your perineal wound please speak with your GP, community midwife or contact maternity helpline for advice.

## Caring for your caesarean wound

It is preferable to shower instead of bathe whilst the wound is healing (for at least four weeks). Soaking the wound for a long period can soften the scar tissue and inhibit healing. Use the shower head to clean the wound well with water, then use a non-scented soap or shower gel (Simple, Dove or Sanex) and let the soapy water gently wash over the wound. Do not put any bath or shower products directly on the wound. Afterwards, pat the wound dry with a clean towel until it is completely dry. Do not use toilet roll or tissue as the fibres can stick to the wound. Do not apply any talc / lotion or moisturizer to the wound whilst it is healing. Expose the wound to air every day to assist wound healing.

Sometimes, patients can develop a wound infection.

Signs of infection can include:

- Redness or new pain around the wound
- The wound leaking pus, or other fluid
- An offensive smell coming from the wound
- Feeling generally unwell or having a temperature above 38 degrees.

If you think your wound is infected call your GP or the Maternity Helpline.

Completed wound healing usually takes 4-6 weeks. A scar will be left once the wound has healed. The visibility of the scar differs from person to person and will continue changing over time. It will always be more fragile than it was before the operation so needs protection.

Scarred skin can be thick, lumpy, dry and itchy. To combat this, scar massage and moisturising can be started as soon as the wound is healed (at six weeks). It is recommended that you massage the scar 2-3 times a day for 5-10 minutes each time to help soften it, prevent skin breakdown and improve appearance.

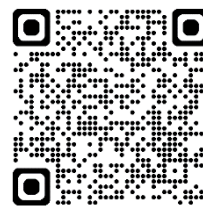
This QR code has detailed guidance on how to perform scar massage safely.



It is important to keep your scar away from direct sunlight. Scars are especially sensitive and can burn easily in the sun. We recommend that you always use a high factor sun cream on your scar when exposed in direct sunlight.



If you have a PICO7 dressing (a dressing with a battery powered pump) on your caesarean wound this QR code will direct you to the information leaflet for this device.



## Contraception

You can resume sexual intercourse as soon as you feel ready and recovered from the birth of your baby. This should always be your choice. It is also normal to not want to have sex but if this is bothering you, please talk to your GP.



You should start thinking about your contraceptive choices to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. You can become pregnant before your period returns, even if you're breastfeeding and before you see your GP at your six-week check.

Your GP will talk to you about your options at this check. This QR code will direct you to further information.

## Cervical screening

A cervical screening test or smear test is a method of detecting abnormal (pre-cancerous) cells in the cervix to prevent cervical cancer. The cervix is the entrance to the womb from the vagina. All women aged 25 to 50 are invited for screening every three years and ages 50 to 64 every five years. It is recommended to wait 12 weeks after birth before having your cervical screening if it is due. If you think you are due a smear test, please contact your GP to arrange one.



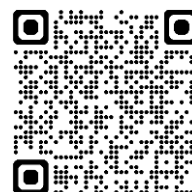
## Taking medications at home

Following your birth, you or your baby may be prescribed medications to take home. There will be instructions on how to administer these medications on the boxes in which they are given to you.



If you are given Fragmin™ (blood thinning injections) please use this QR code to find information and guidance about administering your injections.

If you require pain relief during your recovery at home you can take paracetamol and ibuprofen (unless you have been advised otherwise), following the instructions on the packet. This QR code will direct you to further information.



You might need to take iron tablets following your birth if you have been diagnosed with anaemia. It is important for it to be most effective that you take it every other day on an empty stomach with a source of Vitamin C like orange juice.



For information on taking medications whilst breastfeeding you can find relevant evidence-based information factsheets using this QR code.

## Hypertensive disorders of pregnancy

If you developed a blood pressure disorder in pregnancy you are at risk of developing cardiovascular disease (medical conditions affecting the heart and the blood vessels).

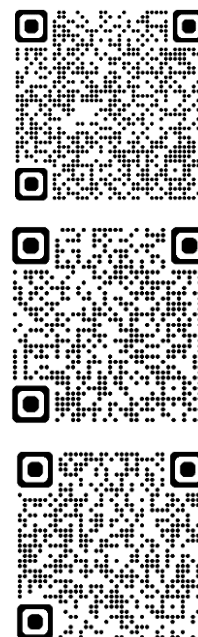
Your risks include:

- Being twice more likely to develop heart disease\*
- Being twice more likely to have a stroke\*
- Being four times more likely to develop high blood pressure\*
- Two out of three women will die from heart disease.

\*Compared to women who did not develop high blood pressure disorders in pregnancy

Following a healthy lifestyle will lower your chance of developing cardiovascular disease in the future. You can do this by:

- Exercising regularly – aim to do 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity a week. Spread exercise evenly over 4 to 5 days a week or every day.
- Eating a healthy diet – eat more fruit, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and reduce your salt intake.
- Maintaining a healthy weight – this will lower your blood pressure and the strain on your heart.
- Breastfeeding for as long as possible – breastfeeding reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Having regular health check-ups – see your GP at least once a year to monitor your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels. Take prescribed medications. When planning your next pregnancy speak to your GT.
- Stopping smoking – this will reduce your risks of heart disease and stroke.



These QR codes will direct you to resources and services that may help.

## The eRedbook

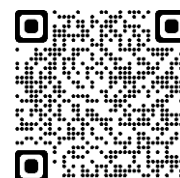


The eRedbook is the UK's digital personal child health record. You should receive a paper version of the red book after birth, but we advise that you also download the eRedbook from Google Play or the App Store.

The eRedbook gives you access to your child's important health records and helps you track their healthy growth and development. Search 'eRedbook' online or use this QR code.

## St George's Maternity 'Going Home Video'

For further important information regarding your discharge, feeding support and much more watch the St George's 'going home' video on YouTube.



## Contact us

You can call the Maternity Helpline on 020 8725 2777.

## Feedback



We would like to hear about your experiences of Gwillim, our postnatal ward. Please use the QR code to complete the Postnatal Discharge Survey. All responses are anonymous and help to shape future improvement projects.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)

## Was this information helpful? Yes / No

Please let us know, contact [patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk) and include the leaflet title.

Thank you.

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### **NHS UK**

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **NHS 111**

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

### **AccessAble**

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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