

What to Expect from Your Menstrual Cycle and Postpartum Recovery



Highlights

During pregnancy, periods stop due to the body retaining the uterine lining rather than shedding it.

Bleeding during pregnancy can happen for various reasons. Early bleeding may be harmless, but later bleeding could signal complications.

Postpartum bleeding (lochia) occurs as the uterus contracts back to its pre-pregnancy size, which can last for weeks.

The return of your period depends on factors like breastfeeding. Some women may experience delayed menstruation, especially with exclusive breastfeeding.

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Why do periods stop during pregnancy?

During pregnancy, your body retains the uterine lining instead of shedding it as part of the regular menstrual cycle. This is why periods stop during pregnancy.

Can I experience bleeding during pregnancy?

Bleeding can happen during pregnancy, affecting about 1 in 4 women. Early pregnancy bleeding can happen due to implantation bleeding, which is usually harmless. Bleeding later in pregnancy could indicate a problem, such as ectopic pregnancy or miscarriage. Always contact your doctor or midwife if you experience bleeding.

What should I expect after giving birth?

After birth, it's normal to experience period-like bleeding as the uterus contracts back to its pre-pregnancy size. Bleeding may be heavy for the first few days and gradually turn brownish over time. Heavy bleeding can occur after breastfeeding or exercise. Consult your doctor or midwife if you experience unusually heavy bleeding or other concerns.

When will my periods return?

Periods may return 4 to 6 weeks after childbirth, but the timing varies based on several factors, particularly breastfeeding. If you bottle-feed or partially breastfeed, your period may return sooner. Exclusive breastfeeding may delay the return of your period for months, even up to 1-2 years. Consult your doctor if you notice changes in your period or experience pain.

Does breastfeeding affect my periods?

It's common for periods to stop during breastfeeding. The duration depends on how often you breastfeed and when solid foods are introduced to your baby. The return of menstruation varies from person to person.

Should I use contraception while breastfeeding?

Ovulation can occur before your first period after childbirth, so pregnancy is possible even if your period hasn't returned. Contraception is important to prevent pregnancy while breastfeeding. Consult your doctor for safe contraception options during breastfeeding.

Does menstruation affect the taste of my breastmilk?

Hormonal changes during menstruation may temporarily alter the taste of your breastmilk. If your baby seems fussy while breastfeeding during your period, it may be due to this change in taste. Consult a lactation consultant if you are concerned.

When is it OK to use tampons again after pregnancy?

If your period returns before your postpartum check-up, use sanitary pads until you receive advice from your doctor. It's recommended to wait until after your 6-week postpartum check-up before using tampons.

Tools and Assistance

Lactation Consultant: If you have concerns about breastfeeding or the taste of your breastmilk during menstruation, a lactation consultant can provide helpful guidance.

Postpartum Support Groups: Joining a postpartum group can help with emotional adjustment and provide a community of individuals going through similar experiences.

Gynecologist or Midwife: For any concerns regarding your menstrual cycle, bleeding, or other complications after birth, your gynecologist or midwife can offer personalized advice and support.

Online Resources: Many health organizations provide resources on breastfeeding, postpartum care, and contraception while breastfeeding. Consult reputable sources for further reading and advice.

Contraceptive Options: Your doctor can assist in choosing the most suitable contraceptive method during breastfeeding to avoid an unintended pregnancy.