The Postpartum Check-Up

Four to 6 weeks after delivery, you will need a check-up. This check-up is to make sure your body is healing without problems. If you have a Cesarean birth, you may need to have your check-up sooner.

Physical Exam:

- **Checking Your Weight:**
  
  A woman usually returns to her non-pregnant weight about 6 months after delivery. The Postpartum period is not a good time to diet. Eat a healthy well-balanced diet low in fats. For more information on weight loss after having a baby, talk to your doctor or nurse. They can advise you on the best way for you to lose weight.

- **Taking Your Blood Pressure:**
  
  This is a routine check to be sure your blood pressure is in a normal range.

- **Checking Your Breasts:**
  
  It is important to have your breasts checked for lumps and nipple problems. Your doctor or nurse should show you how to check your breasts. **Breast self exam is important to do every month after your period.**

  If you are bottle feeding, your breasts will usually return to their normal shape and size in 4 - 6 weeks. You still need to check your breasts regularly for any changes.

  If you are breastfeeding, your breasts still may be full and feel firm by the 6th week. Checking your breasts daily for lumps or plugged ducts can help prevent problems with discomfort or infection.

- **Checking Your Abdominal Incision:**
  
  If you had a Cesarean birth or your tubes cut or tied off, you have an incision. Your incision will be checked to make sure healing is complete.

Pelvic Exam:

This part of the check-up is an internal exam to check the health of your ovaries, uterus (womb), cervix (opening into the womb), and vagina (birth canal). Your perineum, the area around the birth canal, also will be checked for healing.

- **Checking Your Perineum:**
  
  Your doctor or nurse will examine the areas around the vagina, urethra (opening of the bladder), and rectum for healing.
• **Checking Your Vagina And Cervix:**

Your health care professional will slide a thin piece of plastic or metal, called a speculum, into the vagina. A speculum is a duck bill shaped instrument used to hold the vagina open during the exam. Your health care professional can look directly at the vagina and cervix for signs of a problem. A few cells will be taken from your cervix and tested for cancer. This is known as a Pap Smear and is routinely done on a postpartum check-up.

See the handout, *Your Pap Smear* for more information.

• **Checking Your Uterus And Ovaries:**

The last part of the exam is checking your uterus and ovaries. Your health care professional will feel the shape and size of both. Vaginal bleeding or lochia often stops in the first 4 - 6 weeks after delivery. Bleeding that begins 1 month after delivery is usually your period. A rectal exam may be part of the internal exam if you have had a long or deep episiotomy.

See the handout, *Having a Female Pelvic Exam* for more information.

**Question And Answer Time**

After your exam, your health care professional will tell if your body is healing properly after childbirth. This is a good time to ask questions. You may be wondering about returning to work, exercising, birth control methods, or other health concerns. Write your questions down on paper and take them with you to your appointment. Please ask if you have questions.

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**If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.**