

POST-NATAL MOTHER CARE

Even if a new mother feels terrific after her birth, she still needs postpartum care. The body has been through shock and needs time to heal and recover.

- **Perineal Care**

An infusion of Calendula flowers (may be bought dried at most health food shops) can be made, put into a water spray bottle and sprayed freely on the area to help heal and reduce inflammation and any chance of infection. A sitz bath may also be taken with a strong Calendula infusion added. Dipping sanitary pads in the Calendula infusion or water, then freezing them before applying to the perineum can reduce swelling and promote healing.

- **Urinary Tract Infection**

To avoid this, the mother should urinate 6-8 hours after birth. To help: drink lots of purified water, pour water over the vagina, have a sitz bath, use herbal diuretics such as dandelion leaf tea.

- **Constipation**

Drink lots of water with lemon juice added, eat lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, sulphur-free dried fruit, walk around, do pelvic floor exercises, take acidophilus and slippery elm powder.

- **After pains**

These are caused as the uterus returns to its normal size. Pains are usually experienced during breastfeeding and can be reduced by helping the uterus return quickly to its pre-pregnancy size. This can be done by: breastfeeding on demand; massaging chamomile, jasmine or lavender oils on the belly; getting enough calcium and magnesium; herbs (raspberry, cramp bark, motherwort) and homeopathic arnica.

- **Post-natal depression**

Baby blues affect many women during the first week or so after a baby's birth and can last up to around ten days. Post-natal depression is a condition that can last for many weeks or months. It is very important to identify and address post-natal depression as soon as possible. Naturopathy is able to help by giving support to the nervous system using nervine and adaptogen herbs. Herbs are also used to balance the hormones and decrease the excess oestrogen often found in sufferers of PND. Supplements which increase neurotransmitter function, particularly B6 and B12 and folate also help to combat PND.