



Time to heal

Serena Williams and Cheryl Tweedy are proof that every bit of a woman's body undergoes changes after giving birth. Here's what you need to be ready for

SELF
POST DELIVERY CARE

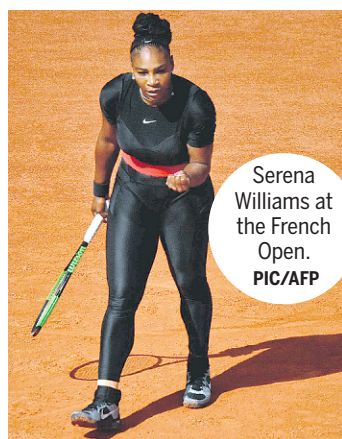


The body

Many women experience pain due to a Caesarean wound or, in case of episiotomy, for natural childbirth.

A woman's body goes from a well-nourished state to a food-deprived state. In many cases, due to traditional restrictions based on religious and caste practices, women don't get to follow the necessary diet pattern. The body needs high protein food to heal better, and additional fluids. Eat one and a half times more, as you are feeding the baby and in recovery. Follow a protein-rich diet and eat good fats. Iron and calcium supplements are important too.

There are instances where the baby takes time to latch on to the breast. This is normal and the issue gets resolved. Sometimes, there isn't enough breast milk, in which case the mother is given galacta-



Serena Williams at the French Open.
PIC/AFP

gogue, which is a stimulant to increase lactation; these can be in natural form or medical. Excess milk can also lead to breast abscess, or formation of pus, which needs to be addressed.

The baby needs to be fed every two to three hours, which can

The mind

The mother needs to be left to herself or with whatever she is comfortable with, as too much enforcement, lack of rest, and being indoor-bound for many months can lead to mood swings and post partum blues. It is important to not think about the baby all the time. Join a support group, as a change in environment is important to feel good and normal.

cause postural problems.

Post the first 40 days of menstruation, some women suffer from lactational amenorrhea, which can mean an irregular cycle. This issue can last for a month to a year after delivery. It is important to use any preferred mode of con-

traception during this phase to avoid unwanted pregnancy.

In many cases, women develop thyroid issues, hypertension and diabetes during pregnancy. Do not stop your medication immediately after the delivery.

Those who already have a thyroid disorder need to monitor their condition to avoid aggravation.

Obesity, if not checked, can worsen other health problems. Start exercising after 40 days. Stretching or yoga, and massages are effective too.

Vitamin D and calcium deficiency gets aggravated post delivery. Lack of sunlight, makes the situation worse.

Dr Veena Aurangabadwalla, gynecologist

Skin and hair

The ups and downs of hormone levels can result in a return of acne for those who have suffered from it in the past. This can also be because of a high nutritional diet, weight gain or pregnancy-related obesity and bad eating habits, or being lactose intolerant. This can be corrected with a nutritional diet.

Most hair is in the growth phase during pregnancy and the hair cycle changes post delivery, which might lead to hair loss. Childbirth puts stress on the body. Plus, the baby takes all the nutrition from the mother. Hair is a protein, and the baby needs a lot of protein to build itself, which it pulls from the mother's system. This results in nutritional loss that leads to hair fall. Post-partum stress and hormonal imbalance are other

causes. The good news is that this is transient or temporary hair loss that is reversed in three months, and depends on the nutritional status of the mother.

In some cases, increased body hair is also seen, which is transient. The birth of a male child can lead to a spurt of male hormones too. This does not need treatment and will return to normal.

Women also experience a darkening of underarms and the groin; this is temporary and one should avoid aggressive treatments such as deep peels or laser. Wait for six months for it to clear, and get treatment only if the condition continues.

It's best not to use any strong products and give your body six months before you start treatment, as most of these changes get self-corrected.

Dr Geeta Fazalbhoy, dermatologist

Avoid the stretch

Chloasma or the mask of pregnancy, which is discoloration of skin, is common. This pigmentation will fade after three to six months.

Abdominal stretch marks, either from previous pregnancy or new marks that are red, are a common concern. Fresher the marks, faster the treatment. Laser works best here, as do creams. Apply cold-pressed coconut oil during pregnancy to avoid this. Coconut oil also gives a cooling effect. Calamine mixed with liquid paraffin is effective too.



Cheryl Tweedy at Cannes Film Festival.
PIC/AFP

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"CATSUIT anyone? For all the moms out there who had a tough recovery from pregnancy — here you go. If I can do it, so can you. Love you all!" wrote tennis icon Serena Williams in a social media post accompanied by a photograph of her in a catsuit at the recent French Open.

Sometimes, even the best medical help cannot change the surprises that nature might have in store. Williams, and British singer Cheryl Tweedy experienced this post the birth of their first child. Williams had a traumatic delivery where her condition for developing blood clots needed urgent medical attention and several weeks of bed rest. Tweedy suffered from hair loss and pigmentation post the birth of her

son Bear, and had to use supplements to control it.

There are certain conditions that need to be identified during pregnancy so that they don't aggravate later. The body has a tendency to clot more, even if it's not prone to it during pregnancy. And, if you have family history, you need to be more wary and receive prophylactic treatment. In such cases, one has to be up and about within 24 hours post delivery to get adequate exercise so that the blood is not static for long time," says Dr Veena Aurangabadwalla, obstetrics and gynecology consultant with a Chembur multi-specialty hospital.

In short, the pain doesn't end just with childbirth for several women but follows with issues related to the sudden changes in the body. Here's what you need to know.



Dr Veena Aurangabadwalla



Dr Geeta Fazalbhoy