

## The Third Stage of Labor

Labor does not end with the delivery of your baby. You'll continue contracting. Typically on the first or second contraction following delivery, the birth clinician will instruct you to push the placenta through the stretched birth canal. This is usually a very simple and painless process. The placenta weighs approximately two pounds, which is larger than most people expect. That's almost a third the size of your baby. Many women can continue nursing their new infant while they expel the placenta.

Following delivery, contractions subside, but continue for the next several days, even weeks, to cinch up the uterus as close as possible to its pre-birth size. Most of the time, women don't even know they're contracting. Within just a few hours of delivery the uterus will shrink down to the size of a cantaloupe. The more you nurse, the firmer your uterus will contract. The nurses will want to massage the uterus to ensure you release any large clots. A very uncomfortable process. This causes the uterus to contract and tighten.

## Nursing

Prior to the birth, you'll need to decide if you will nurse the baby immediately after the delivery or complete newborn procedures first.

Once you decide to nurse your child, keep in mind that it's not always easy. Also, nursing can be extremely uncomfortable if the baby is not positioned correctly. The lactation specialist may offer to demonstrate proper insertion of the breast and provide early coaching. This tutorial may be paramount to avoiding sore or even scabbed nipples.

## Life With Baby

New moms need to get plenty of sleep. Rest when your baby is sleeping. This new stage and frequent night feedings won't last forever. Practice patience with yourself and with your new baby. If you experience pain or frustrations, continue to use relaxation techniques such as deep abdominal breathing and positive self talk.

Finally, always ensure that you sleep your baby on their back. There are many swaddling blankets available to help your baby sleep for longer periods of time.