



## The Fourth Trimester: Preparing for Postpartum

### Important Phone Numbers

Obstetrician/Midwife:

Family Doctor/Pediatrician:

Lactation Consultant:

Nursing Helpline at Local Hospital:

Doula:

### Supply Checklist

Start by creating a "nursing station" in a part of the house that is most comfortable to mom. Have these things readily accessible so no one has to go searching for them when they're much needed. A basket or a divided plastic caddy can be used to organize the supplies and may serve as a portable solution for moving things from downstairs/upstairs easily.

- Comfy underwear
- Overnight pads OR disposable adult underwear
- Peri bottle
- Sitz Bath
- Breast pads
- Water bottle
- Healthy snacks
- Nipple cream
- Cell Phone & Charger
- Small journal and pen (great for keeping track of baby's feeds, wet and dirty diapers, writing down the birth, making lists/notes)
- Burp Cloths/hand towel
- Hair ties
- Lip balm

### Bringing Baby Home

By now your most likely have everything you need for your new baby, but here is my simple version of the "ultimate checklist":

- Basic layette
- Car seat (consider installation by a professional)
- Muslin or flannel swaddles
- Newborn sleep sack
- Newborn cloth or disposable diapers
- Hypoallergenic baby wipes
- Baby massage oil
- Natural baby soap
- Co-sleeper or bassinet
- Infant carrier (wrap or sling)

Limit visitors in the hospital and at home for the first few weeks to facilitate breastfeeding success and bonding for the family. Your postpartum time should not be an event where you feel pressured into entertaining guests. Do ask for help, when you need it. Those that you invite, should be encouraged to bring healthy snacks or prepared meals for the family. Consider asking a friend or family member to start a "Meal Train". Delegate tasks such as running errands or small household chores to friends and family who are eager to help.

## What to Expect the First 6 weeks Postpartum

The following are some possible scenarios following the birth of your baby(ies). Becoming a parent is such a transformative time in your life. With this information, you will feel more confident and prepared.

- Vaginal bleeding. This will happen with both vaginal and cesarean births. Clotting is normal and anything bigger than a golf ball warrants a call to your care provider.
- Uterine pains, or "after pains". As your uterus shrinks back down to size, you may have some discomfort. Breastfeeding helps this process along. You may have more pain with subsequent babies.
- You may be STARVING or not very hungry at all. Either are a very normal reaction and dependent on each specific woman. Some healthy meals include smoothies, yogurt, and applesauce.
- Your first bowel movement may be uncomfortable. Your first BM should be within 3 days of giving birth. Digestion slows after birth, so drinking extra fluids and eating soft foods will make things easier to come out. If you think you may need to take a stool softener, please consult your care provider for recommendations.
- You may experience vaginal pain, pain in your bottom (hemorrhoids) and or bruising. An herbal sitz bath, natural herbal bottom spray, "pad-sicles" or hemorrhoid cream may help ease your discomfort. Make sure to use your Peri Bottle to wash away debris after using the bathroom. Wiping may cause further unnecessary discomfort. You can make your own herbal sitz bath using this recipe:
  - 1/2 cup Epsom salt
  - 2 tablespoons baking soda
  - 2 tablespoons witch hazel
  - 1 tablespoon olive oil
  - 8 drops lavender essential oil
  - 8 drops chamomile essential oil
- You may have difficulty urinating. Remember to stay hydrated and relax as much as possible while trying to "go". It's also possible to have loss of bladder control. Do not discontinue fluids. Wear disposable adult underwear if needed. Kegals and pelvic floor exercises will help heal your muscles.
- You may have stitches from a tear or episiotomy. Once home keep the stitches clean and dry. Change pads frequently and air the stitches out for several minutes a day. This can be done by taking underwear off and laying down with a towel under the bottom and legs bent upwards. Signs of infection include: pus, drainage, red streaking, foul odor, high fever, excessive bleeding or pain. Please call your care provider if you're experiencing any of those symptoms.
- If you have a cesarean section, the incision may be sore for up to 3 weeks postpartum. Numbness around the surgical site is normal until several months after delivery. Your incision should be kept clean and dry, with dressing changes at least 1 time a day or when soiled. Showers will be necessary as your wound should not be submerged for at least 3 weeks postpartum. Do not lift anything heavier than your baby for 6-8 weeks postpartum. Avoid strenuous household chores and exercise until cleared by your care provider. Use of an abdominal binder will aid you in sitting, laying down, walking and standing. Coughing, sneezing, and laughing, may produce soreness in the abdominal area. Holding a small pillow to your stomach and applying light pressure, will help provide support and may ease some of your discomfort. Signs and symptoms of a cesarean infection:
  - severe abdominal pain, redness, or swelling of the wound
  - pus and discharge from the incision
  - pain at the incision site that does not go away or gets worse
  - fever higher than 100.4 F
  - painful urination and/or foul smelling vaginal discharge
  - bleeding that soaks a pad within an hour and/or that contains large clots
  - leg pain or swelling, red streaking

## Sex After Baby

The most common recommendation is to wait at least 6 weeks for sexual activity with your partner. However, it is really up to you to decide when the time is right. Remember, you can still get pregnant during your postpartum recovery, and some form of protection may be necessary. Postpartum hormones coupled with breastfeeding may hinder your sex drive, and that is a normal aspect of postpartum recovery. Some women have no changes and feel ready right away, which is OK too! If you had tearing or stitches, sex may be uncomfortable for a period of time after delivery. Ask your partner to be mindful of this; extra lubricant may also be necessary.

## **Emotional Recovery**

Hormones present after delivery may make you feel happy, euphoric, and in love with your baby and your partner. They may also cause sadness, frustration, or even guilt, especially if you have had a traumatic experience or things didn't go as you had hoped for or planned. Each birth is so very different and even the best laid "birth plans" can change. Please know that your feelings are valid and as your doula, I am here to provide you a listening ear and absolutely nonjudgmental, unbiased support. I can also assist you with referrals to community resources for additional help, if it's determined you are suffering from more than just the "baby blues".

Resources:

Therapist -

Professional Car Seat Installation -

House Cleaning -

Wrap/Carrier Use -

Photography-

Lactation -

Breast Pumps -

Chiropractor-

Massage Therapy -

Mom & Me Yoga -

