



Embracing Postpartum



*Beyond Birth: Your Complete
Guide to Postpartum Handbook*

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Welcome beautiful mama..



Stepping into motherhood isn't just a physical shift.
It's emotional, spiritual, and quietly transformational.

Your body has done something extraordinary, and now your
everyday life is reshaping itself around this new chapter.

This guide was created to support you in that tender space
after birth - where the days can feel long, the nights
unpredictable, and your heart stretched in new ways.

It's your companion for the moments when you just want
someone to tell you what actually helps... , but the practical,
real, simple things that make life easier.

Inside, you'll find grounded tips to help you care for your
healing body, ease the overwhelm, and create small
pockets of calm in your day.

You'll find reminders that bring you back to yourself, and
gentle suggestions that make this season feel a little more
manageable, a little more connected, a little more you.

Some days will feel messy. Some will feel magical. Most will
be a mix of both. But every day, you're growing into a
stronger, wiser version of yourself - even when it
doesn't feel like it.

You are safe.
You are capable.
You are doing better than you think.

Let this guide walk beside you as you find your rhythm
again, one practical step, one honest moment..
one breath at a time.

Love,
Shereen xoxo



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Introduction

The postpartum period is filled with joy, challenges, and profound adjustments. Understanding key aspects will empower and support you during this incredible phase. Reading about these adjustments will provide insights into the initial weeks, including ways of overcoming common challenges.

It's a transition of nurture, for you and your family. This booklet offers practical strategies to nourish and understand your body and mind, ensuring your overall well-being as you embrace your new role.

Throughout this transition, remember that **you are not alone**. Your doula, healthcare professionals, and loved ones are here to offer guidance, reassurance, and support. Please use these guidance sheets to serve you as a resource, equipping you with the knowledge and tools to navigate the joys and challenges of early parenthood with confidence.

In addition, here are some recommended online resources that offer valuable guidance:

- Postpartum Support International (postpartum.net): support for individuals experiencing postpartum depression.
- La Leche League International (llli.org): Offers breastfeeding support and information.
- The Fourth Trimester Collective (fourthtrimestercollective.com): A community-driven website with articles, resources, and support.
- ***Rooted by Caridad & Shereen - offering Pre & Postnatal workshops, events & support***





What TO EXPECT

It's natural to feel a mix of joy, anxiety, and perhaps, a bit of confusion. There's so much to learn and adjust to, but it's equally important to understand the array of changes that you're going through. This postpartum period, commonly known as the fourth trimester typically lasts 6 weeks but can extend up to 12 weeks or beyond. Major hormonal shifts that happen after giving birth can affect you physically and emotionally, and knowing what to expect can help ease the journey.

PHYSICAL *Symptoms*

One of the first things you'll notice post-birth is lochia, or postpartum bleeding. This is your body's way of expelling the extra blood and tissue that supported your baby in utero. It can last anywhere from 2-6 weeks and will gradually lighten in color and volume.

Breast engorgement is another common postpartum symptom. As your milk comes in, usually around 3-5 days post-birth, your breasts may feel firm, swollen, and painful. Frequent breastfeeding or pumping can help alleviate this discomfort, and cold packs can provide relief after nursing.

Postpartum hormonal shifts can also cause hot and cold flushes, often referred to as 'postpartum sweats.' Progesterone levels drop dramatically after birth, potentially causing these flushes. They are most common in the initial postpartum weeks and usually decrease over time.

EMOTIONAL *Well-being*

The postpartum period can be an emotional roller-coaster ride. Due to hormonal changes, lack of sleep, and the overwhelm, it's common to experience the 'baby blues,' characterized by mood swings, anxiety, sadness, and irritability. These feelings typically peak around the fifth day after birth and subside within a couple of weeks.

However, if these feelings intensify or persist beyond a couple of weeks, you may be experiencing postpartum depression, a more serious condition that requires medical attention. Communicate your feelings with your doula, healthcare provider, and support network. They can provide resources, support, and if needed, mental health referrals. Remember, seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Your emotional health is paramount in your postpartum journey.

SOCIAL *Challenges*

Balancing yours and your newborns needs can be challenging, and added pressure from family and friends, however well-intentioned, can sometimes add to your stress. If you need to, set boundaries and communicate your needs, and accept help when needed.

Feeding your baby might not always be as straightforward as it seems. It's common to encounter issues such as latch problems, nipple pain, or concerns about milk supply. A lactation consultant can be an invaluable resource during these times.

Additionally, adjusting to a fussy baby can be overwhelming. Remember, it's normal for babies to have periods of fussiness, especially in the late afternoon and evening. However, excessive fussiness could indicate colic or other health issues, so it's important to consult your pediatrician if you have concerns.





THE BENEFITS OF *Skin to Skin*

In the precious moments following childbirth, the power of your touch after childbirth is immeasurable. Skin-to-skin contact with your newborn not only strengthens your bond but also offers incredible benefits, from regulating temperature to supporting breastfeeding and boosting the immune system. Embrace this transformative experience and witness the wonders it brings to both you and your baby..

1. Bonding and Emotional

Connection: Skin-to-skin contact helps create a nurturing bond that enhances the parent-child relationship.

2. Regulation of Body

Temperature: Newborns are not yet fully capable of regulating their body temperature, and skin-to-skin contact helps them stay warm by utilizing the parent's body heat.

3. Stabilizing Heart Rate and

Breathing: Skin-to-skin contact has been shown to stabilize a newborn's heart rate and breathing patterns. The comforting presence of the parent's skin provides a calming effect, resulting in more regular and consistent physiological responses.

4. Improved Breastfeeding

Success: Skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth and during breastfeeding enhances the baby's natural instinct to root and latch onto the breast. It promotes successful breastfeeding by stimulating the release of hormones that support milk production and supply.

5. Regulation of Blood Sugar

Levels: Skin-to-skin helps stabilize their glucose levels, reducing the risk of hypoglycemia and supporting overall metabolic function.

6. Enhanced Immune System

Function: Skin-to-skin contact exposes newborns to their parents' healthy bacteria, promoting the colonization of beneficial microorganisms on the baby's skin.



BREASTFEEDING

The First Few Weeks

Breastfeeding is a beautiful and nourishing experience for both mother and baby, but it can also present challenges in the early weeks. To ensure a smoother journey, this concise guide provides valuable tips and support to help you navigate the joys and potential hurdles of breastfeeding.



The first 24hrs

It is recommended to nurse your baby as soon as possible after birth. Please ask for guidance with the initial latch if you need it. It's important to know that your breasts already produce colostrum, a valuable early milk that is packed with antibodies. Sometimes, the baby may appear frantic or upset if they don't latch immediately, but this is normal as both you and the baby are learning. Patience and persistence are key, as it may take a few attempts before achieving a successful latch. Additionally, it's normal for babies to have periods of frequent feeding in the first 24 hours, but they also require intervals of recovery sleep, giving you and your partner an opportunity to rest.

Day 2

The continuous stimulation at the breast is your baby's way of signaling your brain to initiate the production of mature milk. During this phase, expect a highly erratic feeding pattern without a set rhythm. For example, your baby may feed for 20 minutes, then sleep for 20 minutes, still appear hungry, and return to the breast for another 40 minutes.

Day 3&4

Nipple tenderness is common during the initial latch, but it should subside with a proper latch. Nipple care tips include exposing them to air, applying milk or colostrum, and using nipple cream. If nipple soreness persists, please ask for help. Mature milk should begin to come in, resulting in a color change to a paler shade, fuller/heavier breasts, and increased swallowing during feeding. Engorgement is normal and can be alleviated by softening the nipple before feeding through hand expression or warm showers.

Day 5 & beyond

During days 5-9, expect your baby to have 8-10 feeds within a 24-hour period. Between days 10-14, your breasts may feel softer, which is normal. To ensure an adequate milk supply, keep track of the number of wet and soiled diapers. From days 14-21 and beyond, it's common for babies to experience a growth spurt around 3 weeks old. If your baby is feeding frequently (known as cluster feeding) and you find it challenging to do anything else, it's normal. This behavior helps increase your milk supply.





BREASTFEEDING

How can I help my partner?

Breastfeeding is a special time for both mother and baby, and as a partner, your support plays a crucial role in ensuring a successful and positive experience. By actively engaging and helping your partner, you can help create a nurturing environment.

Education and encouragement

- **Learn:** Take the time to learn about the benefits of breastfeeding, common challenges, and techniques.
- **Encourage:** Offer words of encouragement and praise for your partner's efforts.

Practical Support

Help your partner find comfortable nursing positions, assist with household chores to reduce her workload, and provide water, snacks, and assistance with nighttime feedings to ensure she feels supported and able to focus on breastfeeding and bonding with the baby. Your practical involvement will greatly contribute to her breastfeeding success and overall well-being.

Emotional support & bonding

- **Be an Active Listener:** Create a safe space for your partner to express her feelings and concerns about breastfeeding. Offer a listening ear, empathy, and reassurance.
- **Participate in Bonding Activities:** Engage in skin-to-skin contact with the baby, cuddle, and provide gentle massages. These activities not only promote bonding but also allow your partner to take short breaks and recharge.





The 5-5-5 Postpartum Rule

The First 15 Days Of Recovery

DAYS
5

In The Bed: Focus on rest and recovery. Prioritize sleep, nourishing meals, and gentle movements. Allow yourself time to bond with your baby with plenty of skin to skin, while seeking assistance with household tasks and basic self-care needs.

100%

OF YOUR TIME
RESTING

DAYS
5

On The Bed: Emphasize emotional well-being. Engage in self-care activities, such as gentle movements with plenty of rest. Connect with supportive visitors if you're ready. Begin to establish a feeding routine, continued skin to skin and learning about newborn cues.

75%

OF YOUR TIME
RESTING

DAYS
5

Near The Bed: Nurturing your strength. Continued bonding and responsive newborn care and other activities, such as bathing. Prioritise rest and building up to 60 min of gentle movements (e.g. walking) and light chores (e.g. laundry folding).

50%

OF YOUR TIME
RESTING

Your partner also plays a crucial role. Some guidance includes preparing meals, running errands, assisting with diaper changes, managing visitors to ensure a peaceful environment, accompanying you to appointments and walks, and most importantly, ensuring you don't take on too much too soon. Remember, every family is unique, so communicate openly with your partner about your needs and work together to create a supportive postpartum experience.



Self Care POSTPARTUM BINGO

Prioritize your well-being as a new parent, using this self-care postpartum bingo. Remember, nurturing yourself is just as vital as caring for your newborn, allowing you to replenish and share the love and happiness that comes with it.

TAKE A NAP	GO FOR A MASSAGE	POSTPARTUM DOULA SUPPORT	MEALS PREPARATION OR DELIVERY	TAKING A BATH OR SHOWER
NATURE WALK	MINDFUL MEDITATION	MIND-BODY CLASS (E.G. YOGA, PILATES, OR TAI CHI)	MINDFULNESS COLORING	EXERCISE
JOIN A PARENT GROUP	JOURNALING	SEEING A FRIEND	THERAPY OR COUNSELLING	HAVING BOUNDARIES
HAVING VISITORS	DISCONNECT FROM TECHNOLOGY	CHIROPRACTOR	HAIRCUT	LISTEN TO MUSIC
SAVOR A HOT BEVERAGE	GETTING SOME FRESH AIR	READING A BOOK	WATCH A TV SERIES	GOING FOR A DRIVE





Postpartum VISITORS

Managing visitors

Communicate the best times to visit and the duration of their stay. Don't hesitate to ask for privacy or reschedule visits if you're feeling overwhelmed or exhausted.

Remember the most important thing is to **prioritize** rest, bonding with your baby, and establishing breastfeeding. If you need to, find a safe place in your home where you can get away to.

Be open about your needs and feelings, and don't hesitate to **ask for help** or express when you need some alone time.

Asking for help

When visitors do come, it's an excellent opportunity to ask for help. Here are some suggestions:

- Meal Preparation or bring a meal
- Household Chores such as laundry or dishes
- Baby Care Support such as diaper changes
- Grocery Shopping; whether it's picking up groceries, medications, or baby essentials.
- Read some books or spend some time with older children

TIP: Place a note in a visible location, such as the entrance or kitchen, of any tasks where help would be greatly appreciated.



Postpartum Recovery Essentials

For the mother

During the postpartum period, it's crucial to prioritize the well-being and comfort. Preparing by stocking up on recovery essential items that can aid in your recovery will provide support.

For the baby

Welcoming a newborn into the world requires preparing with buying necessary items to ensure their health, safety, and comfort. This guide provides some essential items that will help you care for and nurture your baby during the early stages of their life.



Postpartum

ESSENTIAL'S FOR MOM



PADS

Postpartum bleeding, also known as lochia, can be heavy initially. It's important to have a good supply of heavy-duty sanitary pads. Look for pads specifically designed for postpartum use, as they provide better coverage and absorbency.



WITCH HAZEL PADS

Witch hazel pads are soothing and can provide relief for perineal discomfort and swelling. They can be used in conjunction with regular pads or placed directly on the perineum for relief.



PERI BOTTLE

A peri bottle is a squirt bottle used to clean the perineal area after using the toilet. It's especially useful if you've had stitches or experienced tearing during delivery. Fill it with warm water to gently cleanse the area and promote healing.



SITZ BATH

A sitz bath is a shallow basin that fits over the toilet seat or can be placed in a bathtub. It allows you to soak your perineal area in warm water, which can provide relief and aid in healing. You can add soothing herbs, such as calendula or lavender, to enhance the healing properties.



HEATING PAD OR ICE PACKS

Depending on your needs, both heating pads and ice packs can be beneficial. Ice packs can help reduce swelling and numb the perineal area, while heating pads can provide soothing warmth and relaxation to muscles.



PAIN-RELIEVING SPRAY

There are various pain relieving sprays available specifically designed for postpartum recovery. These sprays often contain natural ingredients like witch hazel, aloe vera, or lavender oil, which can provide relief and promote healing.



Postpartum

ESSENTIAL'S FOR MOM



NURSING PADS

If you plan to breastfeed, nursing pads are essential to absorb leaking breast milk. They come in disposable and reusable options, so choose what works best for you.



COMFORTABLE CLOTHING

After giving birth, you'll want loose-fitting, comfortable clothing that allows easy access for breastfeeding and promotes airflow. Nursing bras, loose tops, and comfortable bottoms are all essential.



HEALTHY SNACK AND A WATER BOTTLE

It's important to nourish your body during the postpartum period. Keep a stash of healthy snacks nearby, such as nuts, fruits, or granola bars, and stay hydrated with a refillable water bottle.

Postpartum recovery varies and largely depends on the type of childbirth. After a vaginal birth, physical recovery often takes around 1-2 weeks, although the deeper tissue may take up to 6-8 weeks to heal completely. For a C-section, which is a major surgery, the initial recovery period is usually 6 weeks, but it can extend to a few months for complete healing.

While it's normal to experience certain discomforts like postpartum bleeding (lochia), perineal soreness, and breast engorgement, there are some warning signs that require immediate attention from a healthcare professional.



WARNING SIGNS INCLUDE

- Heavy bleeding that soaks a pad an hour or forms large clots
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Severe abdominal pain
- Painful urination or bowel movements
- Redness or oozing from a C-section incision
- Severe headache, blurred vision, or sudden swelling of hands, feet, or face

Understanding and being prepped for the recovery process is key to navigating the postpartum period. Remember to reach out to your support system (doula) or healthcare professional if you have concerns about your recovery.





Postpartum MENTAL HEALTH

A guide for what to expect & aware of

What to expect

Postpartum mental health is an important aspect of your wellness journey after giving birth. It's important to understand what to expect and to seek help if and when necessary. You may feel joy, anxiety, fear, and exhaustion, often all at once. These feelings are normal, however, if these feelings become overwhelming or interfere with your ability to care for your baby or yourself, it's important to seek help.

The "**baby blues**" are feelings of worry, unhappiness, and fatigue that many women experience after having a baby. Up to 80% of new mothers experience the baby blues. Symptoms often start within a few days of childbirth and can last for a few weeks. They can include mood swings, crying spells, anxiety, and difficulty sleeping.

If your symptoms are more severe or don't fade, you might have a type of **Postpartum Mood and Anxiety Disorder (PMAD)**. If you suspect that you are experiencing these symptoms, it's very important to seek help right away.

PMADs Include:

Postpartum Depression (PPD): This affects about 15% of new mothers. Symptoms may include severe mood swings, excessive crying, difficulty bonding with your baby, and withdrawing from family and friends.

Postpartum Anxiety (PPA): This can affect up to 10% of new mothers. Symptoms include constant worry, racing thoughts, and fear that you're not doing a good enough job.

Postpartum Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (PPOCD): This affects about 3-5% of new mothers and includes intrusive, repetitive thoughts or mental images (obsessions), and doing certain things over and over to reduce your anxiety (compulsions).

Postpartum Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PPTSD): This can be caused by a traumatic childbirth or past trauma, and affects approximately 9% of women.

Postpartum Psychosis (PPP): This is a rare condition, affecting 0.1-0.2% of births, and involves experiencing hallucinations or delusions, often with episodes of confusion and disorientation.

*You have what it takes, but you
don't have to do it alone*



Postpartum

ESSENTIAL'S FOR BABY

1

DIAPERS

Newborns go through a lot of diapers, so it's important to have an ample supply. Whether you choose disposable or cloth diapers, make sure you have enough to last several days. Don't forget diaper rash cream or ointment as well.

2

CLOTHING

Newborns need soft and comfortable clothing. Have a variety of onesies, sleepers, and outfits suitable for different weather conditions. Opt for clothing that is easy to put on and take off, as well as items with snaps or zippers for convenient diaper changes.

3

SWADDLING BLANKETS

Swaddling can help newborns feel secure and promote better sleep. Have a few lightweight, breathable swaddling blankets or sleep sacks on hand to keep your baby cozy and comfortable.

4

INFANT CAR SEAT

If you plan to travel with your baby in a vehicle, an infant car seat is essential for their safety. Ensure that the car seat is properly installed and meets the current safety standards.

5

BABY FEEDING SUPPLIES

If you are not exclusively breastfeeding, make sure you have bottles, nipples, and formula (if needed) ready. Sterilizing equipment, bottle brushes, and a bottle drying rack can also be helpful for maintaining cleanliness.

6

BABY HYGIENE PRODUCT'S

Stock up on baby-friendly hygiene essentials, such as gentle baby soap or body wash, shampoo, baby lotion, and diaper wipes. Additionally, have a soft baby brush or comb for grooming their delicate hair.



Supporting OLDER CHILDREN

The arrival of a new baby in the family can be quite an adjustment for older siblings. To help ease this transition, here are some practical tips to support and prepare your older children for their new roles.



Open Communication: Start discussions about the new baby early on, explaining in age-appropriate ways what they can expect when the baby arrives. Encourage them to express their feelings and ask questions.



Involvement: Let older children participate in preparations for the new baby. This could be helping to set up the nursery, choosing baby clothes, or picking out a special toy. This involvement can make them feel important and included.



Reassure: Reassure your older children that they are still loved and valued. Spend solo time with them, read their favorite book, or engage in activities they enjoy to reinforce your bond.



Interaction: Once the baby arrives, encourage older siblings to interact with the baby under supervision. They can sing, read, or talk to the baby, fostering a bond between them.



Patience: Understand that it's normal for older siblings to have mixed feelings about the new baby. They might act out or regress in their behavior. Be patient, understanding, and provide reassurance and consistency in response to these behaviors.



You are doing an amazing job mama..