

Postpartum 101

Postpartum can be both a time of bliss & much hard work! Practical preparations will help you get ready for the meaningful first six weeks.

Basic Planning

Recommendation for Week 1

Aim to have two adults completely free to take care of self, baby, one another, and nothing else. Eliminate all additional responsibilities or plan for help during the times when one parent is away. Share baby care-taking.

What is the value in having space in our day to linger, stare at our baby, take cat naps, talk, or anything else that may fill "still time" the first week after having a baby?

How can we both eliminate as many responsibilities and activities as possible? In other words, can we let the trash go for a week? Use paper plates? What social/religious engagements can we decline this week? How can we free ourselves of expectations that pictures or emails will be sent? Try to think of *everything* you can eliminate. If one parent must be engaged with other work who can come help during that time?

Who in our lives can bring us meals or spend an hour picking up around the house, doing laundry, washing dishes, or taking care of our pets?

Who can help eliminate or minimize our professional responsibilities? Can someone field phone calls or email so I we are contacted only if it is 110% necessary?

Recommendation for Week 2

Aim to always have one adult completely free to take care of self and baby while the other “gets some stuff done.” Continue to simplify life while reintroducing only the most crucial activities.

What can we continue to eliminate and what needs to come back into our life by week two? Is there anything beyond the necessities that we really want to bring back into life at this time?

How can we “tag team” - taking turns watching our baby while the other rests, takes a break, or works?

If one of us will be gone, for example running to the store or returning to work, how can we set up the house so that the person home with the baby has nothing they need to do other than take care of the baby or them self? Can we make meals ahead of time? Can we save laundry for evening?

How can we be sure that even though we are beginning to tag team baby care we still have some time all together as a whole family and some time as a couple?

Recommendation for Weeks 3 - 5

Aim to gain confidence “multi-tasking” with the baby. Begin with small goals such as showering or making dinner when you are alone with the baby. As a family begin to re-engage with your work and social or religious connections. Go out with your baby. If you are returning to a job at six weeks, begin familiarizing the baby with their childcare provider. If you are breastfeeding begin pumping.

What skills will help me gain independence while alone with the baby? Using a baby wrap or carrier? Promoting napping or night time sleep?

What do I need to organize to go out with the baby?

For those returning to work at 6 weeks: What would help me feel prepared for returning to my job? What would help my baby prepare for my return to my job? Consider transitions that will make it easier for someone else to care for your baby such as bottle feeding and pacifiers.

Recommendation for Week 6 and Onward

Finding the new rhythm! Around this time, all of the important aspects of your lifestyle should be finding a place in your life again - exercise, friends, etc. Your life may be radically different than before you had a baby and it will indeed continue to change week to week as your baby changes over the next six months. It will change month to month for the year after that, and continue to change year to year for many years to come! But while the way you interact with friends may be changing, the fact that you are interacting with them in a meaningful way is essential. The same is true for exercise, time in nature, meaningful work, etc... all of the aspects of life YOU consider important.

What are the important aspects of life for ME? What keeps me happy and healthy?

Which of these aspects of life are in place, and which are absent in my life since becoming a parent?

What is my first priority area to reincorporate or strengthen, and what is a small step I can take to help that happen? How can I begin to do this with the baby, or how can I create time to do it on my own?

Meeting Our Needs

What will help mom recover fully from pregnancy and birth? What will help her enjoy postpartum?

What will help dad/partner enjoy postpartum?

What environment do we want to create around ourselves for the first week after the birth? What are we thinking about visitors?

What is most important for our baby in his/her early days of life? What type of environment do we want for our baby?

If there are siblings, what are their primary needs? How can we meet their needs during the first week after the birth?

What will we eat for the first two weeks? What type of food will best support our postpartum physical, aesthetic, and comfort needs?

Where will that food come from or who will make it? How will we share our food preferences with anyone making food for us? How do we prefer they deliver it?

How will we be sure to stay hydrated day and night?

How will we get enough rest? What is enough rest? How can we tell?

Are there products we need to purchase ahead of time for postpartum healing support?

Pain medications for afterbirth pains and vaginal swelling -

Comfort measures for vaginal swelling such as ice packs, sitz baths, herbal preparations, or bottom sprays -

Prevention or treatment of constipation or hemorrhoids -

Abdominal or back support/stretching -

Neck and shoulder tension or aches -

Breastfeeding discomforts -

Other -

How will we encourage mom's physical recovery?

Who will we call if we have any concerns about postpartum depression or anxiety?

Creating Teamwork

Why am I excited to start a family with you?

How can we affirm one another, and boost each other's confidence as new parents?

What works best for me during times of challenge? Reaching out to others, talking, journaling, walking by myself, a long shower?

What works best for me when I feel very strong emotions?

What are the most important ways we can support one another physically, emotionally and spiritually?

How will we work together to meet our families needs - both financial and around the house?

What mindsets will help us enjoy this time?

What will we do to relax or have fun together?

It Takes A Village!

Who or what can help...

- ...if we need an extra set of hands to hold the baby or help around the house?
- ...if we have questions about baby care or feeding?
- ...if we have questions about baby development?
- ...if we have questions about baby health?
- ...if we need help strengthening our relationship?
- ...if we need help strengthening our physical health?
- ...if we need help strengthening our mental health?
- ...facilitate spiritual/personal growth?
- ...if we need childcare?
- ...if we need help at work to create the time we need for family?
- ...if we need friends/relationships?
- ...if we need renewal?
- ...if we are unsure of how to get around with our baby, care for our baby, or are unsure of our choices?
- ...if we need financial or material resources?