

Postpartum Planning Guide

HOW TO USE THIS SHEET

This sheet is intended as a starting point for discussions about how you will care for yourself during the immediate days postpartum. You need not send your answers to us. This is to help you start the dialogue. Creating a postpartum plan is not a way for you to control the process, but a way to set yourself up for success by establishing resources and support for when they're needed. If you're not sure about any of this, [talk to your Care Partner!](#)

A NOTE ON ASKING FOR HELP...

Many of us struggle to ask for help. This is normal. We live in a culture where a "strong woman" toughs it out, and the less-than-perfect realities of postpartum are well-hidden from our social media feeds. The reality is, you will not be able to do everything yourself, and frankly, no one is meant to. Your loved ones are eager to show up for you but may not know how best to do so. Give them guidance. Tell them what you need. If you don't have a network nearby, this is for you too.

BUILD YOURSELF A SUPPORT NETWORK

We are not meant to do this alone. Establishing your support system is not just nice-to-have, it's quite possibly the most important thing you can do for yourself and your family during these early weeks. (If not, forever!) It's important to be thoughtful about surrounding yourself with people who are supportive, nurturing and who facilitate an environment that allows you to feel safe and at ease.

- RELIEF-GIVERS: Who are the individuals we can call on when we need to rest?
- "ELDERS": Which of our friends or family-members have done this & can offer us non-judgmental support?
- NEW-PARENT FRIENDS: As soon as you can, we encourage you to find a group of parents who are also navigating this life stage alongside you. (You can even start in pregnancy!) Being a part of a team makes this so much easier and more enjoyable. Some resources are:
 - Local new mom/dad groups (check Google, Facebook, or meetup.com)
 - Local breastfeeding support groups (check your pediatrician, hospital, IBCLCs, etc.)
 - Classes (postnatal yoga, mommy & me, etc.)
 - [Peanut App](#) (Tinder for moms! If you're more the one-on-one type, this can be fun.)

FEEDING & NOURISHING

When the time comes, we'll share everything you need to know on how best to nourish your postpartum body. Planning ahead to ensure you are eating warm, nutritious meals will help you tremendously in those early weeks.

- GET YOUR LOVED ONES TO FEED YOU! There are great websites that allow you to have friends, family, coworkers, neighbors or your faith community send you meals for the first several weeks postpartum. (Yes, this is actually a thing people set up for themselves.) Remember - people want to help! We highly recommend getting this set up, and don't be afraid to specify things that you would like (or not like) to eat and a specific time for drop-off. You can even list some preferred takeout options for your friends farther away. (We love: [Give in Kind](#))
- COOK IN ADVANCE: You can also create some large-batch freezer meals ahead of time. [Here are some great ideas](#) to get you started.

- ON THE FLY: Look into healthy take-out options and grocery delivery as well, if available in your area. Most big box grocery chains have delivery options, in addition to [Instacart](#), [FreshDirect](#), [Peapod](#), and [PrimeNow](#).

PLAN FOR REST

Yes, you actually need to PLAN this! Expect to be in bed for your first week and to be only in your home for another week after that (at the very least!) Getting help to squeeze in those extra hours you're missing during the night is a great help.

- **Choose a Gatekeeper** - A partner, family member or close friend can play a critical role in ensuring a mother has space and time to recover. Find the language to help you draw boundaries comfortably and be sure not to fall into a situation where you are entertaining visitors! Make sure to discuss your feelings beforehand so you and your "gatekeeper" are on the same page. (This is a [must-read](#) for tips on how to do this!)
 - Do we want visitors in the hospital?
 - Do we want a day or two at home "just us"?
 - What language can we use that is not hurtful, but protects our space when we want it?
- **Plan for Assistance with Rest**
 - Who can help us get some rest during the day?
 - Who can help us in the evening?
 - Who can help us during the night?
- **Be Selective!** Make sure you have positive, supportive people surrounding you. Everything will be new and you'll be finding your rhythm; critical or judgmental voices have no place nearby. (And, it's okay if you want no one around at all!) You'll be tired and emotional – make sure you are comfortable doing whatever you need to do for you. If you're breastfeeding, you'll be undressed quite a bit. Establishing a good breastfeeding relationship with your baby takes work, and fumbling around with a nursing cover can work against you in the early days. Make sure only those you're comfortable with are surrounding you so you can focus on you and your baby entirely.

HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT

Different households have different needs, but it's worth putting some thought into the things that are important for you to feel like you can focus solely on your own recovery and the baby. Discussing this with your partner or family members is helpful so that you get what you need. Do you need to maintain cleanliness in the house in order to feel at ease? Do you have pets that will need attention? Some thoughts to get you started:

- Grocery stores / services that offer delivery (see above)
- Things we can stock up on ahead of time (toilet paper, shampoo, paper towel, etc.)
- Household chores that are most important to us
- People/services we can enlist for help
- People who can help with pet care

What you'll need on hand...

NOTHING! That's right. If you have your baby, but not one other thing is in place, you're FINE! The hospital has everything you'll need right away - diapers, clothes, blanket, breast pumps, pads -- you name it.

That said, you'll likely see lots of "postpartum must-have" lists floating around the internet and we wanted to make sure you knew what all the fuss was about. There are definitely items that can help make you more comfortable at home. The list below outlines those items *and how they are helpful* – so you can decide for yourself what, if anything, to get ahead of time.

Loose or drawstring bottoms

Whether you have a vaginal birth or c-section, you'll want to wear loose fitting clothing in the early days.

Nursing bra or tank

Eventually you'll want to stock up, but plan ahead with only 1-2 of these. It's helpful to wait until after initial engorgement subsides to determine your bra size. Your size can fluctuate dramatically! We love [Bravado](#), but anything that feels good to you is the right choice.

Robe

You'll be exposed at the beginning. A lot. Skin-to-skin contact is important for your baby in the early days, as is learning to establish a strong breastfeeding relationship without extra fabric getting in your way. We're all about going topless, but it may be helpful to have something to throw on when the mailman (or your father-in-law) swings by unexpectedly.

Nursing pillow

If you're planning to breastfeed, we feel these are a game-changer to keep you comfortable. There is the [Boppy](#) or [My Breast Friend](#) – and you can often find these pre-loved (aka used) if you're looking to cut costs.

Water bottle with a straw

Hydrating is essential! You'll be losing a lot of fluid in the early postpartum days, and you'll need to stay hydrated to maintain a strong milk supply. We recommend keeping one of these by your nursing station and by your bed. The straw will be helpful while one-handed during feedings.

Nipple Cream

Chapped or cracked nipples are common and can be quite painful. Applying a cream preventatively can be a lifesaver in the early days. We like [Motherlove](#) or [Earth Mama](#) because you don't have to wipe them off before nursing. This is great to bring with you to the hospital.

Extra heavy maxi-pads

After birth you will have *lochia* (c-section moms too), or vaginal bleeding from your uterus shedding its lining. This can last up to 6 weeks and you CANNOT use tampons. Having [extra heavy maxi pads](#) on hand (or even [Depends](#)) will be essential.

Underwear

You'll need large full-coverage underwear (aka 'granny panties') to fit your heavy-duty maxi pads. The hospital will send you home with mesh undies that are amazing! They're stretchy, comfortable and disposable -- so grab extras! If you want a personal stash at home, you can order more [here](#) or [here](#). You can also just use extra-large briefs like [these](#).

Sitz Bath

After birth you will definitely have a sore bottom. Sitz baths can help reduce swelling, ease pain and heal tears/bruising. They're also great for hemorrhoids.

Witch Hazel & Ice Pads

Your sore perineum will benefit greatly from the relief of cooling pads and we highly recommend the following. [Witch hazel pads](#) can offer an incredible cooling relief, as can [ice pads](#). (Check out this super simple [tried & true DIY](#) for the same effect!)

Perineal Spray

[Earth Mama's perineal spray](#) has ingredients we can get behind and can offer great relief to sore bottoms. If you feel the need for something stronger, [Dermoplast Pain Relieving Spray](#) can be applied a few times a day for a gentle numbing effect. Often women get this in the hospital to take home.

Stool Softener



Passing your first bowel movement can be scary for some people (though most will have no issue!); a gentle stool softener like [Colace](#) can be helpful during the first week postpartum.

Nursing Pads

Nursing pads can help protect against leaking, particularly as your body adjusts to your baby's hunger cues during your early weeks of breastfeeding. There are plenty of options for both [disposable](#) or [washable](#).

Peri Bottle

Keeping a peri bottle filled with warm water in your bathroom is a must to help ease some of the stinging you feel when you pee in that first week after birth. You'll be given one at the hospital. It works great and its free, but if you feel like upgrading, [FridaMom's model](#) is angled to make the whole process easier.

Healing Salve

For c-section scars, [Earth Mama](#) makes a great all-natural balm that may help with wound repair, cell regeneration and stretch marks (a bit more questionable on this last one).