

My Family Postpartum Plan



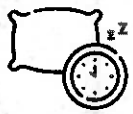
ADJUSTING TO LIFE WITH A NEW BABY



The Family Postpartum Plan is intended as a starting point for family discussions about how to adjust to life once the baby arrives. The goal of the Plan is to identify resources before they are needed to reduce stress and ease the transition period.

Keys to a Happy and Healthy New Life with Baby

- Rest
- Nutrition
- Feeding Support
- Self-Care
- Social Support
- Support with House and Family
- Mental Health - Professional Support



Rest

Getting sufficient sleep may be the most challenging obstacle for new parents after the baby arrives but is the most important thing a

parent can do stay physically and emotionally well. Each parent should strive for 5 hours of uninterrupted sleep to stay well and function fully. Planning ahead is key!

Who is available to help during the day?

Who is available during the night to help?

Are there people to call during the dinner/early evening hours?

Strategies to get sufficient sleep:



Nutrition

Even the most basic needs like eating and drinking can be challenging when caring for a newborn. Before the baby arrives, make a plan for meals for the first few weeks after the baby comes home. Remember to emphasize protein to help with mood and build strength.

Nutritious meals to prepare and freeze before the baby arrives:

Grocery stores that offer online shopping and delivery:

Nutritious takeout and/or delivery options:

Friends who can prepare and deliver meals after baby arrives:

Nutritious menu ideas that are quick and easy to prepare:

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Feeding Support

Feeding a new baby can be a full-time job and can be challenging in the initial days when trying to figure out what works best. Feeding choices – breast, bottle or both – do not have to be exclusive nor do they need to be permanent.

Each baby and each situation is unique. Choose what works best for you, your baby, and your family.

Friends and Relatives that will support and encourage infant feeding choices:

Resources I can consult for help, to answer questions or make recommendations:

Local postpartum doulas who will visit and help with infant feeding:

Local board-certified lactation consultants and other breastfeeding resources who will support infant feeding:



Support with House & Family

There are so many things on the to-do list after baby arrives, but moms cannot do it all themselves, nor should they try! Asking friends and family to help care for older children and make them feel special will help older children with the transition. Asking for help with household chores will make friends and family feel like they truly contributed. Identify things that you can delegate and make a list of ideas of chores that would be helpful when people ask. Keep a list of your support team members and reach out to them for help. Most people will be truly happy that you asked!

Chore List (laundry, unloading/loading the dishwasher, running the vacuum, attending to errands):

Support Team (grandparents, friends, sisters, church members, etc):

Activities to do with older children:



Self-Care

New parents need time to take care of themselves and nurture their relationship as a couple, which is not easy when adjusting to life with baby. Planning time for self-care and time as a couple will ensure that neither is neglected during the transition.

What will I do to rejuvenate me?

What can we do to nurture time as a couple?

Who can we count on for occasional childcare?

Resources for professional childcare providers:



Social Support

Social support is critical to reducing stress and to feel valued and cared for. Identify peers with young babies and find support groups that meet your needs, including postpartum support groups, postnatal fitness classes, breastfeeding groups, on-line discussion groups and virtual support meetings.

Strategies for building a support network include:

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Local social support groups include:

✦ Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADs) are the most common complications of pregnancy and childbirth. Fortunately, these are usually temporary and respond well to some combination of rest, self-care, social support, talk therapy and, if needed, medication. Knowing what resources are available before the baby arrives will prepare you to take quick action to avoid needless suffering.



Mental Health - Professional Support

Talking with other women who are experiencing or have survived perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) can be extremely helpful. Support groups

offer the opportunity to validate experiences, share coping strategies and gain support and encouragement. To find a social support group online or near you, go to postpartumva.org.

Medical professionals play an important role in assisting women recover from PMADs. New mothers can talk with their OB, family practitioner or primary care provider, as well as mental health professionals that can assist with counseling and medication when necessary. Pediatricians can also provide information about PMADs and offer suggestions for support.

I have talked with my OB, midwife and/or doula about the baby blues:

I have talked with my OB, midwife and/or doula about PMADs:

I have talked with my partner about PMADs:

I am aware of mood changes that may happen during or after pregnancy, know that it is common and that I should not be afraid to ask for help if I need it:



Tips

- Sleep dramatically improves mood and can be the biggest risk factor for mental health issues if you are sleep-deprived. Schedule shifts with your partner so you both get good sleep and ask for help to ensure you are getting a minimum of 5 hours of uninterrupted sleep.
- Nutrition is another key to staying healthy - both physically and mentally. Focus on eating high protein, high nutrition foods that you can grab and eat on the go, such as yogurt, cheese, meat, pre-cut veggies and fruit.
- Consider a support group to connect with new moms for friendship, camaraderie, commiseration, humor and advice. Talking with others going through the same experience can help normalize everything and ease the transition into motherhood.
- If things are overwhelming and you do not feel like yourself, a therapist specializing in Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders may be an invaluable help. You may be surprised how much better you will feel after a few sessions.
- Consult postpartumva.org to find a local support group, mental health professional and other resources.