

Journey of Birth

Prenatal Education

Planning for
Postpartum Wellbeing

Practical guidance for maternal
mental health and wellbeing.

Postpartum Wellbeing

In the days after birth, your body is going through the most significant hormonal adjustments that you will experience in your lifetime. Estrogen and progesterone drop by up to 90%, while prolactin and oxytocin increase to support milk production and bonding with your baby.

On top of this, you are recovering from the birth itself, which includes physical recovery and emotional processing - both can include hard elements that are unsettled. Add to this sleep deprivation, learning your new baby's needs, and a new sense of responsibility and it's a pretty overwhelming time!

How does this all affect you...

Physically, you'll be tired, in some discomfort, and likely experiencing night sweats as a result of the hormone adjustments and the excess fluid following birth that your body is trying to remove. You'll have postpartum bleeding, and your milk will be coming in.

Emotionally, you will likely experience fluctuating moods commonly referred to as **Baby Blues**. This can include periods of absolute love and joy followed by despair, overwhelm and tearfulness.

A few words about day three...

Day three can be a peek adjustment day when **every aspect of your initial recovery and adjustment to parenthood seem to collide**. Your baby is a bit fussier, your milk is coming in, latching might be uncomfortable, and learning to breastfeed is overwhelming.

On top of that, you may experience afterpain cramps, and sleep deprivation may be catching up to you.

This is a good day to plan for extra help:

- meal delivery (from a friend or a service)
- household help (light cleaning, space reset, laundry)
- extra tenderness toward yourself and your partner
- a visit from a postpartum doula or a lactation consultant to assist with any feeding or baby care hurdles
- rest, and more rest.

Planning for Support

- Prepare **good food** ahead of time for easy snacks in your recovery period. A nourished body and brain function better.
- **Accept offers of help** from friends or family who can be supportive without being intrusive. Let someone else wash the dishes, fold the laundry, walk the dog or snuggle your baby while you have a shower or a nap.
- Assign a friend or family member as **your person** who will check in on you daily, and asks them directly with **asking about your mental health**.
- If you are able to, hire a postpartum doula, a lactation consultant, or have an experienced friend stop by to **help with baby care and breastfeeding**.
- **Prioritize sleep**. This is SO hard with a newborn, but getting enough sleep really affects wellbeing. Go back to bed for naps, let someone else hold the baby so you can sleep.

In the early weeks and months of new parenthood, some parents experience:

- postpartum depression
- increased anxiety
- intrusive thoughts
- and rarely, postpartum psychosis

Experiences of impacted mental health in the postpartum year can occur in individuals with no prior mental health concerns.

It's also sometimes the case that postpartum depression or other impacts to mental health occur long after the birth.

If your mental wellbeing is affecting your daily life, impacting your ability to thrive, to care for yourself or your baby, or includes thoughts and emotions that concern you, **there is help available**.

Local Mental Health Supports in the Postpartum Period:

- Your care provider, or public health
- **Pacific Postpartum Support Society** (855) 255-7999 or text support 604-255-7999
- BC Mental Health Line 310-6789
- **Brooks Landing Mental Health** walk in crisis counselling 250-739-5710
- Local counsellors with experience in postpartum adjustment and mental health (contact us for more information)

Postpartum Wellbeing Plan

Fill in this template and keep it accessible to you and your partner / loved ones.

My plan for my recovery includes the following **support people and their contacts**:

My plan for my **primary person** who I've asked to **check in on my mental health and wellbeing** (include their name & the plan for how, and how often, they'll check in):

Things that **nourish my wellbeing**, that I can do when I only have 5-20 minutes to myself (a cup of tea, a short stretching sequence, a call with a friend etc...):

Things that **nourish my relationship to my partner** (or friends and family) that support our strong connection and are possible in the postpartum period:

Mothering groups, postpartum fitness, parenting support or education groups I want to check out to **build more community connection for myself**: