



# Postpartum Planning Guide

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This is a guide to help you plan for early postpartum planning. I suggest that you begin your postpartum planning at the start of your 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester, around 28 weeks of pregnancy.

We are going to talk a little bit about how your body changes and the physical/mental demands of early postpartum healing as well as some planning tips to help you feel more confident about this recovery time.



## Postpartum Healing

After the birth of our baby, the placenta detaches from the uterine wall. Then, we birth the placenta which is generally about 8" long, 1" in width and approximately 1-2lbs. in weight. Once the placenta detaches from the wall, it leaves a wound inside the body. The absence of the placenta is a wound that needs time to heal to ward off hemorrhaging and infection.

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The healing time of the placenta wound varies from person to person, but averages 4-6 weeks.

In addition to healing of the placenta wound, the uterus needs 6-8 weeks for “involution” or shrinking back to pre-pregnancy size. You will experience postpartum lochia (or postpartum vaginal bleeding) during this time.

Many new mothers and parents experience some or all these postpartum symptoms.

- Lochia (postpartum bleeding)- can last up to 6 weeks
- Perineal and vaginal tearing
- C-section scar healing
- General body aches and pains
- Fatigue
- Constipation
- Painful breasts/bleeding nipples in early breastfeeding time

In addition to the physical postpartum symptoms, new mothers experience a large drop in hormones which can influence one’s emotional and mental health.

Hormone levels drop rapidly after giving birth, usually within three days, and this is the biggest hormonal change in the shortest amount of time that humans experience. The hormones estrogen and progesterone, which are produced during pregnancy to support the health of the mother and baby, drop sharply after the placenta is removed during delivery. By the fifth postpartum day, estrogen and progesterone levels reach pre-pregnancy levels.

These rapid hormonal changes, along with sleep deprivation and caring for a newborn, can lead to a range of emotional and physical changes after giving birth. For example, up to 80% of new parents experience the “baby blues”, which are feelings of sadness that can occur in the first few days after having a baby. The “baby blues” are usually caused by hormone changes, but they can also be caused by not getting enough sleep, not eating well, or emotional issues. They usually go away on their own within a week or two.

If you are still experiencing these “baby blues” or feelings of extreme sadness or depression, reach out to your healthcare provider immediately.

## **Establishing an Early Postpartum Recovery Routine: A Guide for Expectant Mothers**



### **During Pregnancy**

#### **1. Prepare Your Space:**

- **Create a Comfortable Rest Area:** Set up a cozy spot in your home where you can rest and recover comfortably.
- **Stock Up on Essentials:** Ensure you have postpartum supplies like maternity pads, nursing bras, comfortable clothing, and pain relief options.

#### **2. Plan for Help:**

- **Organize Support:** Arrange for family, friends, or a postpartum doula to assist with chores, meals, and baby care.
- **Create a Contact List:** Keep a list of important contacts such as your healthcare provider, lactation consultant, and support groups.
- **Establish Postpartum Care:** Once a new mother is in her early postpartum recovery window, these things can be very difficult to do, and this is why we suggest

establishing care and setting up postpartum appointments during pregnancy. The three appointments I suggest for every postpartum mother:

1. **Mental Health Counselor-** set up a virtual appointment with a counselor for 1 week after birth. You can do this from the comfort of your own home, and you will be glad to have an expert to help guide you through your emotions.
2. **Lactation Support-** find a lactation counselor in your area that can do in-home or virtual visits. Even if your breastfeeding routine feels OK, they can help you navigate some of the trickier parts, so you don't begin to feel overwhelmed. Stress is the biggest sabotage of breastfeeding, so, let's do everything we can to reduce unnecessary stress. These experts can also help with bottle feeding and pumping.
3. **Set up a Pelvic Health Therapy** appointment for about 6 weeks after birth. They can assess the healing of your pelvic floor and make any necessary suggestions for optimal body healing and care.

### 3. Educate Yourself:

- **Attend Classes:** Take prenatal classes focusing on postpartum care, breastfeeding, and newborn care. The hospital or birth center should provide these classes, but you can also find your local La Leche League chapter for more support.
- **Read Up:** Gather information on postpartum recovery, baby care, and what to expect in the first few weeks. One of my favorite books is Kimberly Ann Johnson's, *The Fourth Trimester*.



#### 4. Focus on Nutrition and Hydration:

- **Balanced Diet:** Eating a nutrient-rich diet helps to support your body during recovery. Set up a Meal Train ([mealtrain.com](https://mealtrain.com)) for your friends and local community to bring you meals for the first 6 weeks of postpartum recovery. In the first 6 weeks it is recommended to eat warming, whole foods like beef stews, chicken soups, warm teas, oatmeal with stewed fruits. The warming energy of these foods helps with womb healing. Check out some recipes from my [Fourth Trimester Healing Foods Pinterest Board](#).
- **Hydration:** Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, especially if planning to breastfeed. Include electrolyte packs in your water to make sure you're getting adequate electrolytes for cell replenishment.

#### During Early Postpartum



#### 1. Prioritize Rest:

- **REST When Baby Sleeps:** Perhaps you've heard the outdated and sometimes irritating "sleep when baby sleeps" advice. New parents can find this advice frustrating. It can be very difficult to sleep so sporadically during the first 6 weeks of recovery. Instead, prioritize RESTING.
  1. Lie down and rest when your baby is napping. Avoid "doom scrolling" on your phone, as this can be mentally exhausting. Try reading a book if you enjoy this relaxing pastime, close your eyes and put your feet up, play a relaxing guided

meditation on your phone to calm your mind. All of these things will soothe your mind and body. Way too often, new mothers and parents try to rush and get all the chores done while their baby is sleeping, but this will only lead to more exhaustion.

**2. Limit Visitors:** Keep visits short and limit the number of visitors to avoid exhaustion. A good rule of thumb is to only allow immediate family members who you love and do not drain you physically or emotionally. If there are people that you have to set firm boundaries within life, they are not the best to have in your postpartum healing space. If those people really want to be supportive, they can offer to drop off a meal or perhaps Zoom Chat with you. Some good boundary phrases for these folks are:

- Thank you so much for offering, but we're trying to keep things simple and quiet today.
- I really appreciate your willingness to visit, but I'm taking some time just for me and the baby right now.
- Your support means the world, but we're not having visitors hold the baby just yet.

## **2. Gentle Activity:**

- **Short Walks:** Start with gentle walks to promote circulation and aid recovery.
- **Pelvic Floor Exercises:** Begin light pelvic floor exercises if approved by your healthcare provider.
- **Online Courses:** My YouTube Channel has a free, postpartum playlist with gentle exercises to help your body and mind recover with ease.

[MamaShakti Prenatal YouTube Channel](#)

## **3. Breastfeeding Support:**

- **Lactation Consultant:** Seek help from a lactation consultant to establish breastfeeding. I am a lactation consultant and I love helping new moms and babies have a smooth and stress free breastfeeding, pumping, or bottle-feeding journey. Email Jessica at [\*info@mamashaktiprenatalyoga.com\*](mailto:info@mamashaktiprenatalyoga.com)
- **Stay Comfortable:** Use pillows for support while breastfeeding to ensure comfort. Try different positions. There are many different breastfeeding positions, and you

may find one that suits your body better than the others. You can find breastfeeding positions, pictures and descriptions, [here](#).

#### 4. Manage Pain and Discomfort:

- **Pain Relief:** Use prescribed pain relief options, ice packs or warm compresses, sitz baths, and herbal baths to manage pain.
- **Monitor Healing:** Keep an eye on any stitches or incisions and report any concerns to your healthcare provider.

#### 5. Emotional Well-being:

- **Talk About Feelings:** Share your feelings with your partner, friends, or a support group. See your mental health counselor about one week after birth or sooner, if you need it!
- **Seek Help:** Reach out to a mental health professional if you experience persistent sadness or anxiety. A good resource for new families is Postpartum Support International.

#### 6. Nutrition and Hydration:

- **Nutritious Meals:** Continue eating a balanced diet to support recovery and energy levels.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water, especially if breastfeeding.

#### 7. Bonding with Baby:

- **Skin-to-Skin:** Practice skin-to-skin contact to bond with your baby and promote breastfeeding. Make sure to hold and talk to your baby. Baby's need emotional comfort in order to thrive.
- **Respond to Cues:** Pay attention to your baby's signals for feeding and comfort.

## Postpartum Cesarean Birth Recovery

If you are healing from a cesarean birth, you will need ample recovery time from the birth process and recovery from major abdominal surgery.

The obstetrician cut through seven layers of tissue and muscles to bring the baby earth side.

Here are some key points to remember.

Soreness in the belly after a c-section is common.

You may feel discouraged if you can't feel any belly sensations or you are having difficulty with everyday movement. Remember lots of work went on in there. Tissue healing/repair is rapid in the first three months of postpartum recovery but continues for 6 months to a year.

Rest is encouraged, as well as permission from your care provider to return to physical activities.

While c-section procedures have greatly improved through the years, it is still important to encourage the new mother to rest, receive as much support as possible, nourish her body, bond with her baby and practice mental health self-care as much as possible.

Here are some suggestions to prioritize your recovery during early cesarean recovery.

- Rest/sleep
- Nourish and hydrate
- Receive help and support (avoid household chores, food prep- if possible)
- Guided meditations for mind/body connection after surgery
- Herbal baths (after 3 weeks)
- Skin rolling and self-massage
- LOTS of breath work to re-establish core connection
- Acupuncture
- Light walking
- Mindful movement practices to help restore your body function

You can find a week-by-week cesarean birth recovery practice in [MamaShakti's C-Section Recovery Course](#).



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