



1. UNINTERRUPTED SLEEP

During the first few weeks following the birth of a baby, new parents need extra help to meet individual sleep needs. Each parent should aim for 5 hours of uninterrupted sleep to maintain normal functioning. Support during the night, naps during the day, and tag-team parenting can all be effective tools for meeting important sleep needs. Schedule this type of support for several weeks; identify several names for each time period. Potential sources of help are family members, friends, doulas, and members of religious and/ or community groups. Now is the time to strategize on how to fill gaps.

People available during the day :

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

People available to help during the night:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

People available during evening hours :

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

People available to “move in” for extra support :

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

STRATEGIES TO GET MORE SLEEP

2 . Nutritious meals and adequate hydration

Achieving even the most basic needs – eating and drinking healthfully – can be challenging when caring for a newborn. Holding, feeding, burping, rocking, changing, and swaddling leave little time to cook.

Plan for meals for the immediate postpartum period BEFORE baby arrives. Prepare meals in advance by “double batching” when cooking in the weeks before baby arrives. Identify grocery stores that deliver as well as take-out options. Ask friends, family members, neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances to prepare and deliver meals once baby arrives. Let people know what kinds of meals you will need (french toast, pancakes) that way you can avoid having 5 lasagnas in a couple of weeks.

Plan to have meals delivered for _____ weeks

Nutritious meals to prepare and freeze before baby arrives :

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Grocery stores that offer online shopping or phone-in delivery:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Nutritious take-out and delivery options

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

People who can prepare and deliver nutritious meals after baby is born (can also use mealtrain.com):

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

3 . Knowledgeable, empowering infant feeding support

Feeding a new baby can be a full-time job. The initial days can be especially challenging as parents and baby figure out what works. Feeding choices – breast, bottle, or both – do not have to be exclusive, nor do they need to be permanent. Some parents prefer one technique ; others choose a hybrid-approach – a combination of breastfeeding, pumping, and formula-feeding – and re-evaluate as necessary.

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

Breastfeeding is a natural process, but it does not always come naturally. Few mothers are blessed with a community of knowledgeable women to provide education, support, screening, and guidance on breastfeeding during the time it takes to establish good breastfeeding habits. However, the absence of these important people may lead to breastfeeding difficulties: painful nipples, inadequate milk supply, slow weight gain for baby, fussy babies, and a sense of isolation. These problems do not have to be part of early breastfeeding; appropriate support can prevent most difficulties. Take steps to ensure feeding gets off to a good start: identify and line up support!

Bottle feeding is also a learned skill and has many aspects, including (but not limited to): what water to use to reconstitute formula, what bottles are best, how to maintain vigilance regarding safety matters, what formula is best, how to ensure correct latch, what holding positions are best, how to time (or not time) feedings, how much to feed, how to store both pumped milk and formula, what methods of making up feeds while traveling are best... and many other aspects which do not even take into account issues that may arise due to individual health, medical, social and emotional matters.

The following are websites with information about infant feeding:

- Formula and bottle feeding information: [Bottle Babies, bottlebabies.org](http://BottleBabies.com)
- Breastfeeding questions and answers: [Kelly Mom, kellymom.com/category/bf/](http://KellyMom.com/category/bf/)

The following friends or relatives will support and encourage infant feeding choices:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

The following people are supportive, informed and up-to-date about infant feeding choices, can answer questions, and will make helpful recommendations:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

4 . Support for older siblings

Older children will experience a time of transition following the birth of a baby. Welcoming the baby with love and maintaining a loving, nurturing relationship with older children is the goal of all parents. Planning ahead to ensure that older children have time to welcome their new sibling but still have special time with their parents is an important step in ensuring a smooth transition.

People who can care for older children when mother goes into labor:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Needs of older children:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

People who will be able to spend quality time with older children, as well as drive them to school, daycare, and activities:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Times of day, rituals, or special activities to share with older children:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Specific strategies to lovingly blend this new baby with the existing family:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

5. Renewing and recharging: maintaining a sense of “self” and “us”

While the time spent together as a family is priceless, parents also need time to continue their own interests, as well as nurture their relationship as a couple. With a new baby, these things do not always happen easily or spontaneously. Many parents find that occasional time for “me” and “us” helps them to be more loving and better bonded with their baby, and as a family unit as a whole.

Loving, responsible **friends and family** who will provide occasional childcare:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Loving, responsible **Professional childcare providers** :

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Activities and “breathers” for **Mother’s rest**, renewal, and re-energizing:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Activities and “breathers” for partner’s rest, renewal, and re-energizing:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Activities and “breathers” for **connecting as a couple**:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

6. Finding friends who are also parents of young babies

Common sense and life experience indicate that having someone who can empathize with experiences normalized problems and makes them more bearable. Research confirms this concept. These friends will enhance life, rather than replace existing support networks. Identify peers with young babies and strategize on where to find these friends. Suggestions include childbirth education classes, prenatal/ postnatal fitness classes, breastfeeding support groups, common friends, “mommy’s day out” programs, on-line discussions groups, and houses of worship.

The following friends, neighbors, and coworkers have young babies:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Strategies for building a support network of friends who also have babies include:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

7. Mental health: It is of the highest importance

Anxiety and/or depression are the most common complications of childbirth and pregnancy. These illnesses – known as perinatal mood and anxiety disorders -- affect up to 1 in 5 women during pregnancy or the first year after giving birth. Fortunately, these illnesses are temporary and respond well to treatment, which often includes self-care, social support, talk therapy, and medication when needed.

Postpartum Support International (PSI) (postpartum.net/) is a non-profit whose mission is to promote awareness, prevention and treatment of mental health issues related to childbearing in every country worldwide. **Postpartum Support Virginia** (postpartumva.org/) is a child organization of PSI.

There are also virtual communities available for both mothers and fathers:

Postpartum Men (postpartummen.com/) is aimed at helping families overcoming postpartum depression by providing firsthand information and guidance through the experience of postpartum depression.

Postpartum Progress (postpartumprogress.com/) is the most widely-read blog in the United States addressing postpartum mood disorders.

PPD Online Support Page is an online group offering information, advice, and assistance to those dealing with postpartum mood disorders, their families, friends, physicians, and counselors.

Postpartum Support International (postpartum.net/Resources/PSI-Chat-with-an-Expert.aspx) hosts free, live phone sessions every week, including **Wednesday chats for moms** and first **Monday of month chats for dads**. During these sessions you can connect with other moms and dads, and talk with a PSI expert about resources, symptoms, options and general information about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders from the privacy of your own phone. There is no need to pre-register or give your name. These sessions, facilitated by licensed mental health professionals, are informational only and open to anyone with questions and concerns. Limited to the first 15 callers. Go here to learn more: postpartum.net/Resources/PSI-Chat-with-an-Expert.aspx

Talking with other women who have survived postpartum depression can be extremely helpful. **Support groups** offer the opportunity to validate experiences, share coping strategies, and gain support and encouragement. Several support groups are active throughout Virginia.

Medical professionals also play an important role in assisting women with postpartum depression. New mothers can talk with an obstetrician, gynecologist, family practitioner, or primary care provider. These doctors can help rule out underlying medical conditions – such as thyroid changes and anemia – that can occur following pregnancy. Mental health professionals can assist with counseling and medication when necessary. Pediatricians can also provide information about postpartum depression.

- o I have talked with my OB, midwife, and doula about the baby blues.
- o I have talked with my OB, midwife, and doula about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.
- o I have talked with my partner about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.
- o I have permission to be aware of mood changes after childbirth and ask for help if I need it.

People who will provide a comforting voice or shoulder to cry on:

People to call late at night:

Local support group:

8. Returning to “normal”

Many families find that the transition to life with a new baby is easier if both parents are at home for a period of time, especially if the family includes older siblings. If both parents cannot be at home, perhaps a grandparent or other relative can provide support. However, each family is unique; identify what works best for you and your family.

If you are returning to work, when are you returning?

What are childcare, babysitter, and daycare options? Seek a high level of comfort about the person or people taking care of baby. Spend time with childcare providers in one or two hours chunks with baby and/or older children.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

What is the plan for housekeeping and chores?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

What is/are mom's concern(s) about this transition?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

What is/are partner's greatest concern(s) about this transition in our family?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____