



DEVELOPING A POSTPARTUM CARE PLAN

The postpartum period can be surprisingly difficult and is often neglected. Without adequate rest and support, postpartum depression is more likely to develop and breastfeeding problems are imminent. Although the television commercials paint a rosy picture of happy babies in clean diapers and smiling, confident moms, the reality for most families is that this is a messy and clumsy experience! It can be a positive (messy) experience with planning and support. You will get off on a good start if you are able to rest and recuperate from the hard work of growing and birthing your baby. Be aware of your needs and do not be afraid to ask for help!

Physical Needs:

Remember that the site that your placenta was attached to is like a wound inside your uterus. It has formed a “scab” to begin to heal. Any over-activity pulls that scab away and causes more bleeding and makes recovery longer. This means that you really shouldn’t be lifting heavy things (like toddlers) or doing activities like sweeping. It takes about 42 days for your uterus and its ligaments to settle back into place, and until then over-activity allows too much movement of the uterus in the pelvis.

HERE’S A TIP: SEVEN DAYS IN THE BED, SEVEN DAYS ON THE BED, SEVEN DAYS AROUND THE BED

As you begin to produce milk, you will need to make sure you stay hydrated and well nourished. Nursing your baby whenever he or she wants is the best way to establish a good milk supply and also make sure that you don’t get engorged breasts. If your breasts do become engorged, warm compresses and expression by hand are very relieving. If you have never breastfed before, do not assume that because breastfeeding is natural it is easy! It can be very challenging for most women. Consider taking a class or purchase the book “Bestfeeding”.

Your bottom may be surprisingly sore. You can add an herbal sitz bath to your birth kit when you purchase it, as well as cold peri-packs. Alternatively, you can prepare some cold pads using pantliners and witch hazel. Store them in your freezer **before** you go into labor!

Emotional and Spiritual Needs:

The biggest emotional need you will have is support! Be aware that the amount of sleep you are getting has the greatest effect on your emotions. It is vital that you are able to sleep when your baby sleeps. Having the proper support means that you can do that.

Once you birth your child, it is as though your heart is walking around outside your body. You may suddenly feel very vulnerable and teary. This is normal! If you begin to have emotions that keep you from being able to care for your self or your baby, please use the attached form to gauge your need.

During your pregnancy, reach out at local La Leche League meetings or childbirth education classes to find other women that are due around the same time as you. It will be so helpful to have someone to talk to that is going through the same things you are!

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Who will be present to help me in the immediate postpartum (the first 2-3 hours after your birth)? If my family is not an option, am I able to hire a doula for this?

Will my current children be attending my birth? Who will be present to support them and stay with them in the event of a hospital transfer?

What do I plan on eating right after my baby is born? Who is going to prepare that for me?

How long does my partner get off work? If it is less than a week, who can come stay with me? Can I hire a postpartum doula or request one as a gift?

Are there meals I can make and freeze ahead of time so that I don't have to cook? Have I purchased paper plates and utensils yet?

Who is in charge of the meal train for after the baby is born?

Am I ready for breastfeeding? What books have I read or classes have I taken? Am I worried about anything? Who can I call if I have problems?

POST PARTUM CARE PLAN

NAME	PHONE (HOME)	PHONE (CELL)	EMAIL	I CAN HELP WITH	DAYS/TIMES AVAILABLE
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION CHECKLIST

This checklist can be used as early as two weeks postpartum. It is intended to help you identify your postpartum symptoms. It is not a substitute for a professional medical evaluation, but may assist your provider with evaluating your needs.

Rate your level of discomfort each day for 10 days, using a scale of 0 to 10. 0 being Not at All and 10 being the Most Severe.

Symptoms Days:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Anger										
Anxiety attacks										
Appetite, increase of or loss of										
Conflicts/personal relationships										
Crying spells										
Decreased interest in appearance										
Decreased motivation										
Depression										
Fatigue										
Fear of harming yourself/others **										
Fear that you will harm baby **										
Fearfulness										
Feeling too good										
Feelings of guilt										
Feelings of panic										
Feeling others are not supportive										
Feeling no love for baby										
Forgetfulness										
Frustration										
Hopelessness										
Insomnia										
Irritability										

Loss of sexual desire										
Low self-esteem										
Mental Confusion										
Mood swings										
Obsessive, repetitive thoughts **										
Panic										
Poor ability to concentrate										
Suicidal thoughts **										
Weight gain/loss										

**Seek immediate professional help

Chart adapted from [Postpartum Depression Demystified: An Essential Guide for Understanding and Overcoming the Most Common Complication after Childbirth](#) by Joyce A. Venis, RNC and Suzanne McCloskey

Support Groups

From <http://www.postpartum.net/locations/georgia/>

The following groups offer support at no charge for women who are at risk of or are experiencing distress such as isolation, depression, anxiety, fearful thoughts, insomnia, trauma, and other difficulties during pregnancy or postpartum. Support groups provide a safe and caring place for connection and recovery. Please call or email for more information.

Postpartum Wellness Support Group

Atlanta, GA

Time: Every other Thursday from 11am – Noon

Telephone: 404-448-1733

You are not alone! This is a free group for moms who want to share and connect with other women for support. The group will offer education, support, and tools to help you feel like yourself again.

Babies welcome!

Registration required

Postpartum Moms Group Atlanta, GA

Telephone: 914.261.8182 or 404.874.8664

Visit www.meetup.com/PPDAtlanta or Call Amber Koter-Puline for more information about individual and small group peer support in the Atlanta area.

New Moms Support Group, Atlanta

Location: Atlanta Medical Center

Time: Every Friday 11:00 – 12:00PM

By Intown Midwifery 404-622-9810

New Moms Support Group, Northside Hospital

Location: Northside Hospital

Time: Every other Thursday from 10:30 – 11:30AM

Mother Wise Support Group (FREE)

Location: Atlanta Birth Center

Time: Every other Tuesday

More info:

<http://atlantabirthcenter.org/event/mother-wise-support-group-free-3/>

Also find a La Leche League group here:

<http://www.llofga.org/atlanta-area-groups.html>