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Postpartum Plan

Plan for Adjusting to Life with a New Baby

Topics

Rest in the Early Days

Nutritious Meals

Infant Feeding Support

Support for Older Siblings

Renew and Recharge

Finding Friends

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Using the Plan

This Plan is intended as a starting point for discussions about how families will adjust to life with a new baby.

The goal of the Plan is to help parents identify resources BEFORE they are needed, thereby reducing stress and easing the transition period.

We recommend planning for the 6 weeks after birth whilst baby, carers and other family members begin to settle into their new rhythm.



Rest in the Early Days

During the first few weeks following the birth of a baby, new parents need extra help to help 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. Include names and contact information:

People available to help **during the day**:

People available to help **during the night**:

Strategies to help get sufficient sleep:



People available to help **during the evening hours**
(especially important if the family has older siblings):

People available to **'move in' or stay overnight** to provide extra support:

Nutritious Meals

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 offer pick up as well as take-out options. Ask friends, family members, neighbours, co-workers, and acquaintances through community groups to prepare and deliver meals after baby arrives. Let people know what type of meals are needed, will ensure enjoyable meals – and avoid having 15 lasagnas in 3 weeks.

Plan to have meals prepared and/or delivered for the first _____ weeks after baby arrives.

Nutritious meals to prepare and freeze before baby arrives:

Grocery stores that offer online shopping, pick up and/or delivery:

Nutritious and affordable take-out or delivery options:

People who can prepare and deliver nutritious meals after baby arrives (*MealTrain.com is free a web-based tool to organize people to bring meals*):



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 excellent websites with information about infant feeding:

Formula and bottle feeding:

Fed is Best, fedisbest.org

Breastfeeding: Kelly Mom, kellymom.com/category/bf/

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

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

Local **postpartum doulas** who will visit and help with infant feeding (*The Doula Tree, Nest & Tribe, Doula Company and Pax Matrum are all local doulas*):

Local board certified **lactation consultants** who will help with infant feeding (*clca-accl.ca is a reliable source for lactation consultants*):

Local **breastfeeding resources** which will provide both emotional support and quality breastfeeding support information (*ask OB, pediatrician, or midwife about these groups*):

Contact **Niagara Parents** to speak with a public health nurse for recommendations and community supports 905-684-7555.

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 labour:**

Needs of older children:

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

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

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



*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:

Loving, responsible **professional childcare providers**:

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

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

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



*Finding Friends Who are also
Parents of Young Babies*

Common sense and life experience indicate that having someone who can empathize with experiences normalizes 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 discussion groups, as well as religious and community groups.

The following **friends, neighbours, and co-workers** have young babies:

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

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 – Canada (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.

Amanda Harry MSW, RSW Psychotherapy and Consulting specialises in 1:1 therapeutic support for parents as they transition into parenthood virtually across Ontario via secure video or phone and in person in Wainfleet, Ontario. Book your free 15 minute consultation or learn more at amandaharry.com.

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 counselling and medication when necessary. Pediatricians can also provide information about postpartum depression.

- I have talked with my OB, midwife, and doula about the baby blues.
- I have talked with my OB, midwife, and doula about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.
- I have talked with my partner about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.
- 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 groups**:

Knowledgeable, professional **mental health care providers**:



Returning to “Normal”

When is your partner returning to work? 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 planning on returning to work? Is it realistic considering sleep deprivation of about 3 months and healing of 4–6 weeks? Is this plan flexible if something changes?

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 hour chunks with baby and/or older children):

What is the plan for housekeeping and chores?

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

What is/are partner’s concern(s) about this transition?

For birth preparation, birth story processing and support as you transition into parenthood visit amandaharry.com to book your free 15 minute consultation.

Covered by many extended health benefit plans!



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