



Innate Start Midwifery

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Preparing for a Healthy Postpartum

Congratulations! You have reached the end of your pregnancy and now get to prepare to have your little one home with you. The postpartum time will be filled with many new blessings and challenges. There are numerous things that you can do to make this transition easier and allow you to recover, heal and settle in with your baby faster. Below are some common changes that take place during this time and suggestions to help you prepare for them.

Breastfeeding:

You will spend much of your postpartum time breastfeeding your baby. In general, babies will want to nurse every 2-4 hours day and night. If you have not breastfed before or recently, you will most likely develop some soreness. However, this soreness is typically mild to moderate and only during the initial latch and first couple of minutes of nursing. In general, babies will want to nurse for 5-30 minutes at a time, though many will want to stay attached and comfort nurse for much longer periods. It is important to pay attention to when your baby is actually eating and when they are comfort nursing because during the latter they tend to pull off and suckle on the very tip of your nipple which can cause tissue damage and significant pain. Prior to delivery, I recommend you attend a La Leche League meeting and/or read the book *The Motherly Art of Breastfeeding* to learn how to properly latch your baby for optimal nursing and minimal discomfort. I also recommend a good nipple cream by Earth Mama Angel Baby to help create a barrier and protect the tissue as well as encourage healing. Your milk will come in around 3-5 days after you deliver and you may become engorged. If this happens your breasts will become very full, firm and warm to the touch. Nursing your baby often will help alleviate this as well as a warm shower and gently expressing some of the excess milk. Be careful not to express or pump more than necessary as it will promote more milk production and perpetuate the engorgement.

Sleep:

One of the most important parts of postpartum recovery is getting enough sleep. Your baby will typically sleep for 2-4 hour periods at a time, with possibly one long stretch a day of up to 5 hours. Newborns often get their days and nights confused for a period of time which makes getting your sleep even more difficult. It is important to rest as often as possible when your baby is sleeping, especially in the first couple of weeks. Some babies will settle back to sleep quickly after nursing, while others will want to be rocked, walked around, bounced, etc. If you have others in your home who are



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responsible and would like to help take care of the baby, this is a good time for them to hold the baby so that you have more opportunity to rest.

Perineum:

Your perineum may be quite sore the first few days postpartum. It will often feel swollen and bruised as well as increased tenderness if you have any kind of a tear. It is common to have some stinging when you urinate and a peri bottle with warm water is helpful. Even better, an herbal sitz bath made with comfrey, lavender and calendula is very soothing and promotes healing. This can be used directly in a bath or made up as a tea and used in a peri bottle. If you have any tears, it is imperative that you try to keep your legs together, pat dry instead of wipe when you use the toilet, and avoid going up and down stairs as much as possible as these things can irritate the torn tissue and/or stitches and interrupt healing.

Nutrition and Weight Loss:

Your body requires an additional 500 calories on average in order to sustain breastfeeding. Having freezer meals prepared prior to your delivery and a meal train for after your delivery will help you keep up with your family's needs while you recover and care for your baby. Fluid intake is also very important in order to produce enough milk. This is not the time to try to lose weight quickly. On average, women lose around 12 # with delivery, and an additional 5 # in the first week. The majority of women will hold on to 5-15# in the first several months of their baby's life in order to maintain a reserve for their baby.

Bonding:

The postpartum period is a sacred time that allows you and your baby to bond. Spend as much time as you can holding, nursing, and sleeping near your baby. You will learn their cues and be able to meet his/her needs while your baby becomes more secure in his/her new surroundings and regulates his/her body's functions with the help of yours. Becoming a parent often brings a lot of new emotions. Not only are you taking on new roles and are responsible for a new human being, but you re-evaluate your own parents and upbringing. Bringing a new human into the world brings new perspective on creation and spirituality as well as your part of a community. Finding other mothers who are like-minded can offer you support as you navigate these new roles. You may find local mothers' groups that get together regularly, and at the very least you can find various online forums for mothers according to your interests.