



Prepare for Your Postpartum

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“How you take care of yourself the first 40 days postpartum makes a difference from the next 40 years” ~Ayurvedic traditions

Your body has spent approximately 40 weeks developing, growing, and nourishing another human being. Your uterus grew, your pelvis opened up, your breasts got fuller, your blood volume increased, your digestion changed, your hormone levels greatly increased, your brain changed, and your emotional state went up and down. Many different changes happened in order for you to grow and sustain your baby's life. Then at the end of the marathon of pregnancy, you gave birth.

Whether it was vaginally or via C-section, your body underwent a delivery process that dramatically changed the state of your body. You have transitioned from taking care of your baby inside of you to them now being on the outside and requiring your attention and care. If you are breastfeeding, your body now has a different demand placed on it, as you create the milk to feed your baby. If you are formula feeding, you are still feeding a baby according to their schedule, which means around the clock care as well. You are experiencing the healing of the placenta wound and possibly a C-section scar.

This time of healing during the first 40 days up to 3 months, also known as the fourth trimester of pregnancy, is not to be rushed. It is to be respected, it is to be honored, and it requires the mother to hold space for her transition. So how can you take care of yourself intentionally in your immediate postpartum period? You do this through five basic principles: **rest, nutrition, movement, bodywork,** and **leaning into your community.**



Rest

What is the purpose of rest during postpartum?

In the same way that we rest after we have injured another part of our body, like an ankle, knee or shoulder, we also want to give time for our bodies to heal, especially the uterus and pelvic floor. The wound left behind from the placenta needs to heal and requires weeks to do so. Rest can come in different forms, whether it is your actual sleep at night or resting/napping during the day.

Sleep quality is highly important, since sleep quantity will likely be interrupted. Whether it is having a conversation with your partner regarding bedtime routines or scheduling in naps during the day, do what you can to get enough sleep. You can also set up time to intentionally rest. Sitting, laying down, stretching, just being for 5-10 minutes helps create mental rest.

Thanks to our societal pressures, it can feel awkward or uncomfortable to “not do anything”. We measure our worth by our productivity. Externally we may not be doing much, but while resting postpartum, you are giving space for your body to do much healing internally. You may not see the actual changes occurring, but if you have had a baby previously, you know that your body very quickly tells you when you haven't been resting enough. Signs like your postpartum bleeding increasing, feeling more cramping, and being more tired indicate that your body still needs you to rest.

Action item:

How can you train your mind to feel comfortable with resting and just being, and not feeling like you should be doing something?

Add in a supplement like magnesium or herbs like chamomile, lavender, and lemon balm to help you get a better quality of sleep.



Nutrition

What is the purpose of your nutrition postpartum?

The food we eat is what nourishes the cells of our body. When it comes to healing, the quality of our nutrients and the types of nutrients in our food makes a difference. Think of sources of protein, high quality fats, and healthy carbohydrates. During the postpartum period, the food you eat and what you drink plays a role in how well you feel and how quickly you heal.

Having meals in the freezer, having a meal train from friends and family set up for after your baby arrives, and/or having a meal delivery service all take the pressure off of you needing to know what to eat and having to prepare it when you should be resting with your baby. Snacks bought or prepared ahead of time are also an easy way to get the nutrients you need.

How do you know what is nourishing? Research Ayurvedic medicine and other cultures' postpartum food traditions. You'll find there is much information on warming foods, warming spices, easy to digest foods, and comforting meals. Meats, eggs, cooked vegetables, broth, and grains like rice and quinoa are staples.

Action item:

In what ways can you intentionally set yourself up with nourishing meals, snacks, and drinks ahead of time?

What is the first food and drink you want to have after your baby is born?



Movement

What is the purpose of your movement postpartum?

Moving your body after your baby has arrived requires time and grace. The type of movement that we are referring to here isn't necessarily an exercise regime or workout plan, but a way of intentionally moving your body. This includes diaphragmatic breathing, ergonomics at home, light stretching, walking, baby wearing, and doing house work. As mentioned in the section on rest, it is important to give your body the time and space it needs to fully heal and adapt.

Movement can also be a nourishing part of that healing process. Diaphragmatic breathing helps you reconnect to your core muscles and pelvic floor. How you sit, stand, walk, and move around your home can also help to strengthen your body and help increase your energy levels as you recuperate from labor and delivery. Your body may feel foreign to you with all the changes that occurred during your pregnancy and after, and intentional movement is one way that you can reconnect with your physical body and get to know its new form.

Action item:

Map out a walking route by your home.

Look up diaphragmatic breathing on YouTube and practice this breathing style.

Practice posture awareness as you are sitting, standing, and moving around at home or work.



Bodywork

What is the purpose of getting bodywork postpartum?

Bodywork in the forms of chiropractic care, craniosacral work, massage therapy, pelvic floor physical therapy, craniofascial work, Mayan abdominal massage and others are all external ways that you can take care of your body. The intentional and specific care that you would receive from a practitioner can also walk you through your healing and recuperation postpartum.

Chiropractic care addresses your nervous system through your spine, craniosacral and craniofascial address the fascia surrounding your nervous system, massage and Mayan abdominal massage address the muscles as well as your visceral organs, and pelvic floor physical therapy addresses the healing of your pelvic floor.

In addition to care you may receive from a practitioner, you can also get loving bodywork at home from loved ones and your own self. This can include things like head, neck, and foot rubs, dry brushing, C-section scar desensitization, and yoni steaming. It is up to you to decide what will feel good and nourishing for your body.

Action item:

What kinds of bodywork practitioners do you want on your health team?

What kinds of loving bodywork can you receive at home from loved ones?



Community

What is the purpose of having a community around you postpartum?

The postpartum period is a time of calling in those around you. How can you get support so that you have people to lean on during a time when you are at your most vulnerable? The purpose of this is to set up help for meals, house cleaning, laundry, watching other kids you have, or anything else you may want help with.

Once you have your physical circumstances addressed, also note who you have around that you can talk to, vent to, cry to, laugh to as you journey through motherhood for the first, fifth, or tenth time. The community of support is there for both your physical and mental wellbeing. This is especially a period of time when you should not be isolated from the world. You will be at home doing minimal work, yes, but that does not include staying all by yourself.

Having a community also doesn't necessarily mean 10, 15, or 20 people. Having 2-3 people around you who you can ask for help can definitely be adequate and beneficial. The saying that it takes a village to raise a child should also include that it takes a village to hold a mother. Create your village.

Action item:

Who is around you that you can call in or lean on when your baby has arrived?

Practice asking for help. It may be uncomfortable but it is a necessary skill.



As you prepare...

I hope this mini guide has been helpful in getting you started on your postpartum plan. If you have found this interesting, check out the full length, self-guided course prepared to walk you through each of these five principles more in depth.

Sending you all of the love and strength you need as you bring your baby into this world!

In health and motherhood,

Dr. Morgan