

Planning for your postpartum time is often neglected in light of planning for your labor and birth. While it is important to prepare for the big day of welcoming your baby, it's equally important to prepare for the new realities of your day-to-day life: recovering from birth, adjusting to the big hormonal shifts that happen, and caring for your newborn. This handout is a tool to help you plan and be as prepared as possible!

1. Know what to expect: Research breastfeeding and baby care, ask friends about their experience and what things they wish they'd have known and been prepared for.
2. Ask for help: Recruit family members, friends, church family, etc. to help you out by bringing meals, cleaning your house, doing laundry, dropping off groceries, or caring for older children. When people offer to help, take them up on it--let others bless you by caring for you in this special time.
3. Make a plan ...and then hold it loosely. Newborns, like all children, excel in teaching us to be flexible.

List a few words that you would like to describe your postpartum time:

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How do you think you will cope with interrupted sleep? What plan do you have for catching up on sleep?

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How do you plan to stay well-nourished and hydrated while you're busy caring for a newborn?

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Do you have any other children to take care of? Do you have a plan for help with your children?

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What are 4-5 specific ways you anticipate needing help in the postpartum period.

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Have you set healthy boundaries with family members? A set time for them to visit? To help with chores?

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How do you plan on feeding baby? Do you have the supplies you need?

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Will you have to return to work and do you plan to breastfeed/pump when you do? What is your work's breastfeeding/pumping policy? Is there a designated place?

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How do you and your partner plan on connecting while you are recovering? How confident are they in baby care?

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Do you and your support people know the symptoms of postpartum depression and anxiety?

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Who are 3-4 people you can call when you feel the need for extra support?

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What potentially helpful services can you scout out in advance (chiropractor, lactation consultant, etc.)?

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Ways you can prepare prenatally:

- Eat well starting right now
- Freeze meals for the postpartum period
- Practice resting and relaxing at home
- Slow down and prune your calendar if it is full. If you never stop going it will be a dramatic and jarring stop once you give birth
- Read affirmations daily, the words you tell yourself impact your brain more than you know
- Do deep breathing exercises daily
- Journal
- Read educational books about the birth you desire, listen to podcasts and follow influencers you connect with
- Evaluate your mental state, are you doing well or do you need to seek help before baby comes
- Talk to your friends who have recently had children and find out what products they found the most helpful for postpartum care and baby care the first few weeks
- Attend a pregnancy support group
- Attend a birthing class that matches with your birth plan as a hospital based birthing class may not be the best prep if you're planning a home birth
- Get adequate sleep to help your body reset for the next day
- Gentle movement/exercise daily
- Ground yourself and spend a few minutes outside each day
- Prepare your older children by helping them learn to make simple snacks, clean up after themselves and get used to not being picked up
- Think of ways to be present with your children after birth such as playing card games, movies in bed together and actively listening to them tell stories goes a long way
- See a chiropractor throughout pregnancy or as soon as possible while pregnant
- See a pelvic floor therapist while pregnant to correct any pelvic floor concerns
- Take time to get on the same page with your partner by discussing hot topics such as finances, baby vaccinations, family boundaries, household expectations, who will take care of baby, etc.