



# POSTNATAL PLANNING

## WHY MAKE A POSTNATAL PLAN?

Across the world many cultures have traditions for the postnatal period that set an amount of time aside for the mother or birthing person to rest, recover and adapt to parenthood. Friends and family gather to care for the new parents during this time and it is recognised that support is required when a new baby arrives into the family.

In the UK, very few traditions are recognised or practised, with sometimes praise even given to parents who are seen to be up and about and returning to “normal”. With 1 in 5 women suffering with postnatal depression and some of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world, perhaps it is time to change how we look at the postnatal period here in the UK.

In creating a postnatal plan, it is recognising the need for rest, recovery, support, and time to adapt to parenthood. While every eventuality cannot be planned for, the real value of a postnatal plan is in creation of it; the exploring of options, finding what is important to you, and how that can be achieved.

## THE FOURTH TRIMESTER

The Fourth Trimester is a term coined to the first few months of a baby's life. A time where the baby is adapting from life outside of the womb and also a time where parents are adapting to their new roles. Like any new job there is often a period of settling in and learning the new role. Parenting is no different with many new skills and emotions to navigate, recognition is needed for the time required to transition into a whole new person. A mother, a father, a parent.

When a baby is born, they enter a very different environment; from a dark, warm, cosy place to bright lights, loud sounds, and spacious environments; which can be an overload on the senses. Helping recreate a womb like environment during the fourth trimester can assist in the baby's transition from womb to world.

WOMB	WORLD	IDEAS FOR TRANSITION
DARK	LIGHT	SOFT LIGHTING, CALM SPACE
MUFFLED SOUNDS, CONSTANT HEARTBEAT	LOUD SOUNDS, UNFAMILIAR SOUNDS	USE FAMILIAR SOUNDS SUCH AS PARENT VOICE, SKIN TO SKIN TO HEAR HEARTBEAT, WHITE NOISE, HUMMING/SHUSHING SOUNDS
WARM	CHANGING TEMPERATURES	SKIN TO SKIN TO HELP REGULATE TEMPERATURE
CONFINED SPACE	LOTS OF SPACE	HOLD BABY CLOSE, USE OF SLINGS
CONSTANT MOTION	OFTEN STATIC	WALK WITH BABY IN SLING, ROCK, SWAY
CONSTANT SUPPLY OF FOOD	SPACED FEEDS	FEEDING ON DEMAND AND LOOKING FOR EARLY HUNGER CUES DISPLAYED BY BABY

## WHAT TO EXPECT FOR THE POSTNATAL BODY

There can be lots of changes to the body after pregnancy, however the baby is born.

POSTNATAL BODY	STRATEGIES
AFTER PAINS- Usually for a few days after birth as the uterus contracts to return to original size	HOT WATER BOTTLES REST EMPTY BLADDER OFTEN
BLEEDING – known as lochia, it is the body shedding the uterine lining after pregnancy. Can be heavy but lightens up and can last up to 6 weeks	HAVE A SUPPLY OF MATERNITY PADS FOR THE WEEKS AFTER BIRTH KEEP TRACK OF CLOTS – Lots of large clots may be a sign of something more serious and needs reporting to the midwife
SORE PERINEUM - can be swollen, bruised or have stitches after birth. Can be sore to urinate.	CHILLED PADS – Frozen sanitary pads with witch hazel POUR WARM WATER OVER AREA WHILE URINATING OR URINATE IN SHOWER

CONSTIPATION	EAT FIBROUS FOOD – Grains, fresh fruit, veg DRINK LOTS OF FLUIDS
HAEMORRHOIDS- can occur from pushing during labour	TOPICAL ANAESTHETICS HOT AND COLD COMPRESS SITZ BATH
CHANGING BREASTS - Can become engorged when milk comes in.	MASSAGE BREASTS, WARM FLANNEL, SOAK IN SHOWER OR BATH CAN HELP EASE DISCOMFORT
SORE OR CRACKED NIPPLES	SEEK SKILLED SUPPORT - Breastfeeding can have challenges, seeking skilled support can help make adjustments to ensure comfort.
CAESAREAN SCAR	AVOID HEAVY LIFTING AND DRIVING KEEP SCAR CLEAN PAINKILLERS FOR DISCOMFORT WEAR LOOSE CLOTHES WITH HIGH WAISTBAND DRINK PEPPERMINT TEA TO HELP EASE ANY TRAPPED GAS
NIGHT SWEATS- Common in weeks after birth as shed extra water retained during pregnancy	DRINK EXTRA WATER TO AVOID DEHYDRATION WEAR LOOSE CLOTHING LAY ON A TOWEL
PELVIC FLOOR- May experience some incontinence due to the pressure put on the pelvic floor from pregnancy and birth	PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES SKILLED SUPPORT - Pelvic floor therapist, a mummy MOT check up
HAIR LOSS - In the months after birth hair that has been retained during pregnancy starts to shed	GOOD NUTRITION
FLUCTUATING MOODS- Low mood often called ‘Baby blues’ is common day 3-5, often in conjunction with the milk transitioning from colostrum to a milkier consistency	SELF HELP TECHNIQUES SEEK SKILLED SUPPORT IF ONGOING - Ongoing low moods or changes to usual behaviour could be signs of postnatal depression. Speak with the health visitor or GP

## CREATING A POSTNATAL PLAN

“It takes a village to raise a child” is the old saying, and still remains true to this day.

Thinking about how the baby’s needs can be met during their transition from womb to world and meeting your own needs of a changing body and transitioning to a parent; what will your support look like during this time? What do you need help with? Who will be part of your village?

If you wish, use the template below to think about the different categories where support may be needed and what you can put in place.



# MY POSTNATAL PLAN

## YOUR POSTANTAL PERIOD

What would you like your postnatal period to look like?

Consider:

- *Hopes*
- *Concerns*
- *Cultural traditions*

## HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT

What may you need support with? Who can help with this?

Consider:

- *Cleaning – Can paying for a cleaner be a gift from someone*
- *Laundry - What visitors can help with putting machine on, hanging washing, folding, putting away*
- *Feeding/walking pets*
- *Packed lunches for older children*
- *Pre-book delivery slots for food and add basics for house*
- *Not sure what else? Look at what do in a day, write it down; what gets done without realising*
- *Struggle to switch off and relax: Identify one thing that needs to be done to give yourself permission to relax*

## FOOD AND NUTRITION

How can you ensure you are nourished and fully hydrated?

Consider

- *Batch cooking in pregnancy*
- *COOK meals/vouchers*
- *Vouchers/meals as gifts*
- *Snacks in rooms where feed*
- *Water bottles around house, that can be opened one handed!*
- *Book food delivery slots – add essential items, snacks and few quick meals eg ready made soups and pre-cooked grains to mix in to make a filling quick lunch.*
- *Basket have next to you for feeding (water, snacks, remote, book, muslins, charger) – Can partner stock up this basket before night time or going to work?*
- *Approx. 300-400 extra calories a day needed for producing breastmilk*
- *Protein meals for building the muscles*

## EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Who can you turn to for support if struggling? How can they help you?

Consider:

- *Friends*
- *Family*
- *Helplines*
- *Social media - what is good for mental health, what is not?*
- *Journaling*
- *Support groups*
- *What do you do for emotional release now? How can that be adapted to do with a baby?*

## HELP WITH OLDER CHILDREN

What might you need help with? Who can help?

## How can you prepare older children for arrival of the baby?

Consider:

- *Own doll to mimic Mummy*
- *Look at photos of them as baby - set expectations of what a baby does*
- *Visit friends with baby*
- *Stories/books about becoming a big sister/brother*
- *Discuss what baby will be able to do – manage expectations*
- *Discuss what will happen when you go to give birth – who will stay with them etc*
- *Set up items – “this is where baby will sleep” etc*

## How can you prepare for coming home with the baby?

Consider:

- *Avoid visitors at nap times*
- *Ask visitors to play with older child before seeing baby*
- *Expectations of how older child should feel/react*
- *Get them involved - bring nappies, wipes etc*
- *Let them come to the baby in their own time*

## How can you prepare for caring for multiple children?

Consider:

- *Nursery/school run – who can help?*
- *Playing/play dates – Are they helpful?*
- *Entertainment bags/tasks can do together while feeding – easy sitting activities eg. Stickers, books, role play*
- *Ask family/friends to hold baby so can play with older children*
- *Friends/family taking them out or playing at home – set boundaries of how much want the older child away, do you want them to be brought home if asking?*
- *Sling for baby to free up hands for attending to older children*
- *Snacks/drinks in easy reach for older children so can help themselves if needed*
- *Toddlers – check if need toilet before start feeding the baby!*
- *Do not feel guilty for extra screen time – creating time to rest yourself is important*

## POSTNATAL RECOVERY

### What are you expecting? What supplies do you need?

Consider:

- *Creating a postnatal "nest" to rest in – fill with oxytocin inducing items to want to spend time their eg pictures, music, tv, nice bed linen, plants, lighting*
- *Pain killers – ibuprofen is ok with breastfeeding. Avoid aspirin*
- *Padsicles in freezer (google "padsicle" recipes)*
- *Massage – research local options*
- *Closing the bones*
- *Placenta remedies*
- *Sitz bath*
- *Maternity pads for bleeding*
- *Jug for warm water – pour on self as urinate to neutralise the urine and prevent stinging*
- *Passing stools with stitches – hold pad over stitches if need to feel security for straining (midwife can also prescribe a gentle laxative)*
- *Have a place to put baby down upstairs and downstairs*
- *Changing supplies and baby clothes downstairs and upstairs to avoid regular use of stairs (particularly after caesarean birth)*
- *Pro-active with painkillers in first week, do not wait for the pain – alternate ibuprofen and paracetamol*
- *Resereach a local Mummy MOT physio to check the body and support with rebuilding (the NHS 6 week check is not sufficient enough!)*

## VISITORS

### Who would you like to have around?

Think about:

- *Oxytocin vs Adrenaline people – treat your postnatal space like your birth space*
- *Who can you feel emotionally and physically vulnerable around? Think of all the postnatal changes the body is going through*
- *Are you comfortable asking these people to help?*
- *Who do you want to visit in the first week, 3 weeks, month? Everyone else can wait.*



Any rules you would like to set? How will you enforce these rules?

Consider:

- Set visit times
- Avoid nap times of older children
- Limit visit
- Include boundaries in baby announcement
- Note on door – Womb to World Art do a great tasteful poster to display [New Baby Visiting Rules Sign A3 PDF Poster \(wombtoworldart.com\)](#)
- Partner gate keeper/organiser of visitors
- Code word for when want visitors to leave
- Stay in bed – it gives the impression not to stay long when visiting somebody in bed, and no chairs to sit down in

## YOUR RELATIONSHIP

If you have a partner how will you make time for each other?

Consider the 4 main areas of conflict

1. Sleep deprivation
  - A postnatal plan is for both
  - How will both get rest? Can you do shifts holding the baby – you both don't need to be awake at the same time
  - Parenting load during parental leave and after when return to work – set expectations, who will be responsible for what
2. Parenting styles
  - Discuss antenatally types of parent would like to be
  - What is important to you in parenting eg. Routines, nutrition, breastfeeding etc
  - What you liked and didn't like from your own parents style
3. Division of labour
  - What can be outsourced?
  - Where will responsibilities lie during parental leave and after when partner is working
4. Intimacy
  - What is your personal "love language" eg acts of service, receiving gifts
  - Rethinking what sex or intimacy means for you both

## USEFUL CONTACTS

MIDWIFE: \_\_\_\_\_

HEALTH VISITOR: \_\_\_\_\_

DOCTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

LACTATION CONSULTANT: \_\_\_\_\_

POSTNATAL DOULA: \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

NCT FEEDING HELPLINE: 0300 330 0700

NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING HELPLINE: 0300 100 0212

PANDAS HELPLINE (Pre & Postnatal Depression support/helpline): 0808 1961 776

ASSOCIATION OF TONGUE-TIE PRACTITIONERS: [www.tongue-tie.org.uk](http://www.tongue-tie.org.uk)