

Mothership Midwifery ~ Postpartum Plan Ideas

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Why a Postpartum Plan?

A woman's labour and birth experience is extremely important and can set the stage for the postpartum period as well as long term emotional and physical health for both mom and baby. However, planning for what comes next (the postpartum/postnatal period) is often overlooked. The days and weeks following the birth of your baby are a major time of transition physically, mentally and emotionally. It is a lot like the time and effort that typically goes into planning a wedding while often overlooking the lifelong marriage that comes after it.

The postpartum period is generally defined as the first 6 weeks following the birth of your baby.

Just like labour and birth, there are a lot of unknowns in the postpartum period and you may not truly know what you need until it's happening, but it's SO important to start thinking now about supports you might need in place to set you up for success in the early days. Once baby is here it can be a whirl wind of epic proportions and your self-care and nourishment can get moved quickly to the bottom of the list. A postpartum plan can support you and your growing family with a smooth transition and help to ensure you don't lose yourself in the process.

Lots of diapers, sleepless nights and forgetting to brush your teeth are pretty much a given but a lot of the challenge that comes in the days and weeks after baby is born can be lessened (at least in part) by planning ahead, slowing down and working effectively with your new reality. This process can be easier by having supports in place like meals, family support and maybe even a Postpartum Doula. As you get more comfortable in your role as a parent and have physically healed, it's important to start to reclaim bits of time for yourself. If your baby's health and well being is a priority (and of course it is!) then so too should be your own. Your child is profoundly interconnected with you. This means that taking care of yourself is a very real way of caring for your child. This plan will help you to ensure that your health and well-being remain a priority.

Things to consider:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Taking Care of Baby | 7. Sleeping Arrangements |
| 2. Taking Care of Mom | 8. Meal Planning, Preparation and Postpartum Nutrition |
| 3. Bonding with Baby | 9. Processing the Birth Experience |
| 4. Visitors/Guests | 10. Breastfeeding Support |
| 5. Delegation of Roles | 11. Community Resources |
| 6. Mom and Partner Self Care | |

1. Taking Care of Baby— A key component of your postpartum period is to think about the people in your life who can support you and your partner, be that extra pair of hands and do things like meal prep, light housework, taking care of older siblings, etc. so that you and your partner can focus on bonding with baby and rest and recovery. These people can include family, friends, neighbours, a Postpartum Doula or a combination of all of them. Don't be afraid of "bugging" people, they actually DO want to support you. Don't be afraid to look like you don't know what you are doing or can't "handle" it. One of the number one things moms say they wish they had done more of is **ask for help**.

2. Taking Care of Mom – Once baby is born the spotlight instantly shifts from mom to baby. While the needs of your baby are obviously vital, your health and well-being should not move to the bottom of the list. No matter the method of delivery it is very important that you give yourself time to rest and recover. Just as you go through a lot of changes during pregnancy, your body is going through a lot of changes after birth. Just like the oxygen mask on an airplane, you have to take care of yourself before you are able to take care of anyone else. Think of things you will need after baby is born to assist you in resting and recovering – help around the house, having baby care stations set up on the main floor of the house or in your bedroom, or healing tools such as pre-made healing pads (see instructions below) and/or herbal baths.

Frozen Postpartum Pads

These can be made in the final weeks of pregnancy and kept in the freezer so they are ready when needed

- ~ 1 part alcohol free witch hazel
- ~ 1 part aloe vera gel
- ~ 3-5 drops lavender essential oil (optional)
- ~ Mix in a small bowl and spray or spread over pads/cloths
- ~ Stack saturated pads placing foil or parchment in between so they don't freeze together
- ~ Place stack in a mixing bowl to help them pre-form to a woman's body (optional)
- ~ You will want to make approximately 10-15 pads

3. Bonding with Baby – Sometimes bonding happens immediately, and sometimes it doesn't. No matter your experience, know that it's normal. Think of activities that you can do as a family that will help encourage the bonding process. Things to consider might be staying in bed, skin to skin, breastfeeding, and baby wearing (this is a great one for mom and partner!) See the plan for more ideas. If there are older siblings in the family it is important to try to include them in some of these activities and get their assistance with baby in age appropriate ways to help them bond with baby and feel like they still have a place in the family. It becomes more of a juggling act once you have more than one as you will want to find one on one time with older siblings when possible to maintain the bond you've formed with them and assist them in adjusting to their new reality.

4. Visitors/Guests – Depending on your personality and how social you are to begin with, you'll have different ideas of how many visitors are too many and how soon you want to invite visitors at all. You may want to consider a "baby moon" for the first few days or weeks following birth where you minimize visitors and just focus on bonding, rest and recovery, learning to breastfeed, etc. The hours, days and weeks after birth is not a time for you to be worrying about entertaining guests. It's important for you and your partner to discuss your expectations around visitors ahead of time to help prevent any disagreement later on. If visitors ask if they can bring something a good answer is always food. If they ask if they can help, say yes and give them a job – maybe emptying the dishwasher or watching baby so you can have a shower. Don't be afraid to stipulate how long the visit will be before people arrive and to clearly state when the visit is over because you need to tend to your or baby's needs.

5. Delegation of Roles – It is common for there to be tension between a couple if each has different expectations about how life with baby will be and they are not communicated. It's very important to take some time now, before baby arrives, to talk openly about the roles you see each other performing.

Are you going to need extra help?

Who is going to do the laundry and dishes?

Who is going back to work and when?

Who will be up in the night with baby?

If communication is already a challenge for you as a couple, it won't get easier when you are tired, so this is definitely one to work on now.

6. Mom and Partner Self-Care – It's important to immediately start scheduling "me" time after baby is born. What "me" time looks like in the first weeks and months will likely be quite different than before, but even a 20 minute bath or the opportunity to walk around the block by yourself or go for a pedicure can make a world of difference. It's important to remember that while you are now a parent, you are still YOU. Take some time to think about the things that make you feel like YOU, make you feel relaxed, refreshed and happy. Make a commitment to do those things regularly. At least 10-20 minutes a day of doing something that makes you feel good. This is important for both mom and partner and making this a priority can help to strengthen your relationship as a couple as it helps to prevent resentment from building and increases your positive energy to nurture your baby and each other.

7. Sleeping Arrangements– Be open and flexible in this area and do what you need to do to ensure everyone is getting the sleep they need in a safe way. You may need to try a few different options until you find what works best for you and your family. In the weeks before your due date I recommend that you put the pregnancy books away and spend some time learning about baby sleep patterns and infant development. Learning what is normal and natural for a baby will help you in those early days to relax and go with the flow. Contact me if you'd like some recommendations.

*"People who say they sleep like a baby usually
don't have one." ~ Leo J. Burke*

8. Meal Planning, Preparation and Postpartum Nutrition – Try to plan your meals for at least a month before baby arrives. This can include preparing freezer meals ahead of time. In the last few weeks of pregnancy make it habit to double all recipes and put half away for later. This includes things like muffins, granola bars, soups, stews, etc. Ask for friends to provide freezer meals/snacks or gift certificates to your favourite take out restaurants in lieu of other shower gifts. For second or third babies some women opt for a “fill my freezer” shower instead of a traditional shower. Snacks and meals that you enjoy whether hot or cold and can be eaten one handed are a great idea as you will be holding and/or nursing your baby A LOT in the beginning ~ this means spaghetti may not be your first choice!

Your body is amazing at ensuring your baby gets everything he/she needs from your breast milk, so it's not necessary to worry too much about baby's nutrition if you are breastfeeding. However, if you are not getting adequate intake of vitamins and minerals your body will start to feel the toll. It's important for your physical, emotional and mental well being that you are being properly nourished. You need to heal and your body needs to re-set itself. The fluctuations in hormones and sleep deprivation can lead to mental and emotional distress and can be lessened through proper nutrition.

During the postpartum period the last thing you need to worry about is eating any **exact** diet. Be gentle with yourself and just focus on nutrient-dense foods. These are foods that contain the maximum amount of nutrition with the least amount of empty calories from sugar or unhealthy fats. Nutrient-dense foods include; eggs, fish, meats (organic if possible), plain yogurt or kefir, nuts and seeds, nut and seed butter, brown rice, quinoa, sweet potatoes, green leafy vegetables, fresh fruit, avocados, vegetables in general, coconut oil, herbal teas (nettle and oat straw in-particular). It's easy to get enough nutrition for you and baby if you focus on these foods. The key is to enlist help in the early days to keep ready to eat food and snacks in the fridge at all times. Your partner, family, friends and even a Postpartum Doula can and should be helping in this area.

Very Berry Protein Shake

- 1 scoop protein powder
- 2 heaping tbsp ground flax
- 1 Tbsp almond or sunflower butter
- 1 Tsp coconut oil
- 1 big handful of greens (spinach, leaf lettuce, kale or collards)
- 1 frozen banana
- 3/4 cup of frozen berries or other fruits
- 1-2 cups of water (depending on consistency you prefer), ice cubes if you like it super cold.

Blend, serve, enjoy!



Chocolate Avocado Mousse Recipe

Adapted from www.draxe.com

Serves: 8-12

Ingredients:

- 1/2 c. Medjool dates
- 1/2 c. maple syrup
- 1 1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 3 ripe avocados
- 3/4 c. cacao or cocoa powder
- 1/2 c. cold water

Directions:

In a food processor blend dates, maple syrup and vanilla extract until smooth. Add avocado flesh (pits removed) and cocoa powder and process until creamy, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl with a spatula if needed.

Add the water and process until smooth.

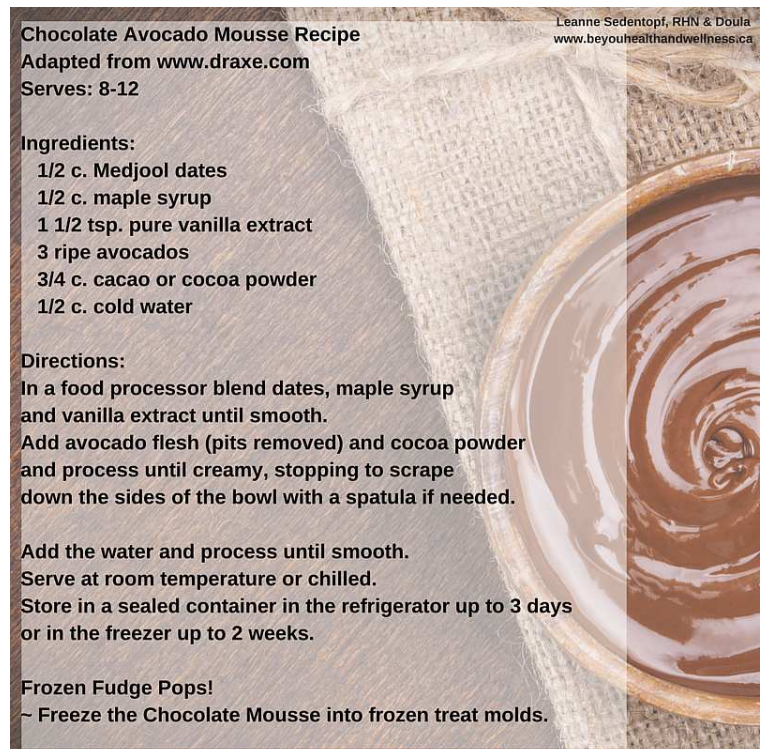
Serve at room temperature or chilled.

Store in a sealed container in the refrigerator up to 3 days or in the freezer up to 2 weeks.

Frozen Fudge Pops!

~ Freeze the Chocolate Mousse into frozen treat molds.

Leanne Sedentopf, RHN & Doula
www.beyouthealthandwellness.ca



9. Processing Your Birth Experience – There is no other experience like childbirth. It pushes you out of your comfort zone and maybe even to the edges of what you thought yourself capable of doing. For many it can be an empowering and affirming experience while for others it can be disappointing and even traumatic. No matter how you feel about your birth it's so important to reflect on how it went and write down your feelings. I know first-hand that unprocessed feelings after birth can become suppressed emotions that may increase your chances of postpartum depression and resentment later on.

Writing down your feelings can be a huge relief. For others, painting, sketching, or writing a poem may be most cathartic. Choose the method that works best for you, just find something if you need it.

Writing your child's birth story for them is such a lovely gift for the future. It's lovely to be able to snuggle on the couch and tell them about the day they were born. Many of the details will fade over time so taking some time to write it down (or even narrate it into your smart phone) in the first week or two after the birth is best.

10. Breastfeeding Support – Although breastfeeding is natural, it's not always easy. You and your baby are involved in an intimate dance and it can take time to learn the steps! Finding support from your partner, other moms and a Certified Lactation Consultant (if needed) can make all the difference when learning to breastfeed.

Know ahead of time who the support people are in your area so you can quickly get the help you need, if/when you need it. Make sure you are using credible sources of information – La Leche League, Dr. Jack Newman, etc. for your research and learning around breastfeeding as there is a lot of unhelpful and sometimes dangerous information out there.

11. Community Resources – taking a bit of time now to research some of the resources and services available to you after the birth of your baby is well worth the time. In a sleep deprived state, even Googling something can feel like a lot of work. Think about some of the things you think you might need or fun things you'd like to try with your baby and start a list. You can always add to it later. Look for things like: Postpartum Doula, Lactation Consultant, Mom and Baby fitness, Library Programs, Early Years Programs, Public Health Programs, Chiropractor, Massage Therapist, Naturopath, Nutritionist, Mom to Mom swap and sell groups, and any others you can think of.

Please remember that life is unpredictable. This tool is meant to be used as a guide of things to consider but can in no way guarantee what your experience will actually be like. It is not meant to replace the support of Midwives, Doctors, Doulas or any other professionals.

My Postpartum Plan

Taking Care of Baby

I/we plan do the following (check all that apply):

- ☐ Care for the baby, older siblings and take care of the house on our own
- ☐ Have help from family and friends
- ☐ Hire a professional Postpartum Doula
- ☐ Hire a Mother's Helper to assist in taking care of older siblings

It truly does take a village...the following members of our village are available to support our growing family.

_____	Times/week	_____
_____	Times/week	_____
_____	Times/week	_____
_____	Times/week	_____

Taking Care of Mom

For my physical recovery after birth it is important that I:

My partner/friends/family can help me by:



Bonding with Baby

I/we plan to bond with baby in the following ways (check all that apply):

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staying in bed | <input type="checkbox"/> Snuggling | <input type="checkbox"/> Baby wearing | <input type="checkbox"/> Skin to skin time | <input type="checkbox"/> Newborn Photos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limiting visitors/outings | <input type="checkbox"/> Breastfeeding | <input type="checkbox"/> Co-sleeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Family walks | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playing with/reading to/singing to baby | <input type="checkbox"/> Bath time/bed time rituals | | | |

I/we plan to help older sibling(s) bond with baby in the following ways (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playing with/reading to/singing to baby | <input type="checkbox"/> Assisting with diaper changes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family walks | <input type="checkbox"/> Snuggling |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Visitors/Guests

Do you want to have specific visiting times?

How many visitors will you welcome at a time?

When will you be having visitors?

How long are your visitors staying?

How can your guests help you? Are they bringing food?

*Tip: come up with
a code word or phrase
to signal when it's time
for guests to leave.*

Delegation of Roles

Who will care for the baby at night?

Who will care for the baby during the day?

Who will do grocery shopping and other errands?

Who will care for older siblings?

Who will do the laundry and other light housework?

Who will cook meals and prepare snacks?

Who will take mom and baby to appointments?

Who will be going back to work and when? Who will look after baby?

Partner #1 – I expect my partner to:

Partner #2 – I expect my partner to:

Mom Self-Care Routine

The following activities relax and uplift me:

- ☐ Napping
- ☐ 10-20 min of alone time
- ☐ Reading
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ Going for a walk
- ☐ Taking a shower/bath
- ☐ Meditating
- ☐ Talking to a friend
- ☐ Other: _____

I commit to doing at least one of these activities _____ times/week.

The following childcare is in place while I take care of me: _____

Partner Self-Care Routine

The following activities relax and uplift me:

- ☐ Napping
- ☐ 10-20 min of alone time
- ☐ Reading
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ Going for a walk
- ☐ Taking a shower/bath
- ☐ Meditating
- ☐ Talking to a friend
- ☐ Other: _____

I commit to doing at least one of these activities _____ times/week.

The following childcare is in place while I take care of me: _____

Sleeping Arrangements

I/we plan to:

- ☐ Co-sleep – visit www.cosleeping.org for a listing of resources on this topic
- ☐ Have baby sleep in parent's room in a bassinet or crib beside the bed
- ☐ Have baby sleep in a crib in his/her own room

While baby sleeps, I plan to:

- ☐ Shower
- ☐ Sleep/rest
- ☐ Spend time with older children
- ☐ Do housework
- ☐ Read
- ☐ Connect with friends
- ☐ Other: _____

Meal Planning, Preparation and Postpartum Nutrition

I/we understand the importance of nourishing mom so she can heal and nourish baby. I/we plan to do the following to optimize my/our family's nutrition (check all that apply):

- ☐ Have _____ pre-made snacks in the fridge/freezer that mom can eat one handed (i.e., high protein muffins, granola bars, chopped veggies and fruit)
- ☐ Have _____ days worth of prepared meals in the freezer before baby is born
- ☐ Cook meals _____ times per week
- ☐ Have family/friends cook meals _____ times per week

- ☐ Order take-out/delivery _____ times per week
- ☐ Using a meal delivery service _____ times per week
- ☐ Have my placenta encapsulated by _____ to promote healing and wellness
(name of encapsulator)

I have the following supplements ready to maximize my nutrition during the postpartum period

(Always consult with a qualified practitioner before starting any new supplement regimen)

Processing the Birth Experience

I/we will do the following to process the birth experience:

- ☐ Write or hire someone to write the birth story
- ☐ Look at photos/videos from labour/birth
- ☐ Speak with friends/family
- ☐ Speak with a Counselor
- ☐ Other: _____

Breastfeeding Support

Prenatal Breastfeeding Class ☐ Yes, with _____ ☐ No

Contact info for local La Leche League or other Breastfeeding Support Group is:

Friends and family I can ask for help: _____

My partner can support a positive breastfeeding experience in the following ways:

- ☐ Bring baby to mom while she gets comfortable and ready to nurse
- ☐ Change baby's diaper before or after nursing
- ☐ Bring mom an easy to eat snack and a glass of water
- ☐ Tell mom what a great job she is doing
- ☐ Other: _____

Community Resources

The following are some local resources I can contact should I need them:

Professional Lactation Support Person: _____

Postpartum Support Group: _____

Postpartum Doula: _____

Safe post-birth fitness options: _____

Baby sleep professional or resources: _____

Mom and Baby activity groups (library, early years centre, etc.): _____

Health Practitioners (Nutritionist, Naturopath, Chiropractor, etc.): _____

Counselor: _____

Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist: _____

Other: _____

This guide is meant to help make the transition to life with a new baby as smooth and relaxed as possible. Moving beyond the early days you will also want to consider and prioritize things like; re-establishing date nights with your partner, finding ways to include fitness and activity into your life once you are physically able, spending quality one on one time with older children, going back to work and more. Life is a constant evolution to our ever changing circumstances and that is only more enhanced with children. In the midst of all the planning, do try to pause once in a while to be in the moment and enjoy the ride.

*Slow down, take a deep breath and trust your instincts.
YOU are exactly the parent that your baby needs.*