

# Postpartum Preparation Guide

Setting yourself up for a supported fourth trimester

The "fourth trimester" (first 12 weeks after birth) is a period of profound adjustment. Planning ahead can make this transition smoother for your whole family.

## Prepare Your Home

- ☐ Create a nursing/feeding station (water, snacks, phone charger, burp cloths)
- ☐ Set up multiple diaper changing spots
- ☐ Prep safe sleep space for baby
- ☐ Stock up on postpartum supplies (pads, peri bottle, stool softener)
- ☐ Organize baby clothes by size
- ☐ Prepare freezer meals (aim for 2 weeks worth)
- ☐ Deep clean or hire cleaning service
- ☐ Set up a "recovery basket" with essentials in each main room

## Build Your Support System

- ☐ Make a list of people who can help (and HOW they can help)
- ☐ Set up a meal train
- ☐ Research and save phone numbers: pediatrician, lactation, postpartum support
- ☐ Discuss postpartum plan with partner
- ☐ Consider a postpartum doula for extra support
- ☐ Plan for older children and pets

TIP: When people ask "How can I help?" be specific: "Can you bring dinner Tuesday?" "Can you hold baby while I shower?" "Can you run a load of laundry?"



## Physical Recovery

Expect these normal postpartum experiences:

- Vaginal bleeding (lochia) for 4-6 weeks
- Cramping, especially while breastfeeding
- Breast engorgement around day 3-5
- Night sweats
- Hair loss (usually starting around 3 months)
- Constipation (drink water, eat fiber, take stool softener)
- Exhaustion and overwhelm

## Self-Care Essentials

- ☐ Rest when baby rests (even if you can't sleep)
- ☐ Eat regular, nourishing meals
- ☐ Stay hydrated (especially if breastfeeding)
- ☐ Limit visitors in the first 2 weeks
- ☐ Accept help without guilt
- ☐ Get outside for fresh air when ready
- ☐ Be gentle with yourself

## Warning Signs - Call Your Provider If:

- Heavy bleeding (soaking more than 1 pad per hour)
- Fever over 100.4°F
- Severe headache that doesn't improve
- Pain, swelling, or redness in legs
- Chest pain or difficulty breathing
- Thoughts of harming yourself or baby
- Feeling like you can't cope

**IMPORTANT:** Postpartum depression and anxiety are common and treatable. If you're struggling, reach out to your provider. You deserve support.



## Emotional Wellness

The "baby blues" (mood swings, tearfulness) affect up to 80% of new parents and typically resolve within 2 weeks. Watch for signs of postpartum depression or anxiety:

- Persistent sadness or emptiness
- Difficulty bonding with baby
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Racing thoughts or excessive worry
- Changes in appetite or sleep (beyond normal newborn disruption)
- Feeling like you're not a good parent

## Meal Prep Ideas

Freezer-friendly meals to prepare ahead:

- Soups and stews in freezer bags
- Casseroles (lasagna, enchiladas)
- Breakfast burritos
- Muffins and lactation cookies
- Pre-portioned smoothie ingredients
- Marinated proteins ready to cook

Stock your pantry with easy snacks: nuts, granola bars, crackers, cheese, fruit.

## Partner Planning Conversation Starters

- How will we handle nighttime feeds/wake-ups?
- What does household help look like from each of us?
- How will we communicate when we're stressed or overwhelmed?
- What are our boundaries around visitors?
- How will we each get some personal time to recharge?

