

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?

