

REALISTIC NEWBORN PLAN FOR THE _____ FAMILY

Plan For Adjusting to Life With A New Baby

TOPICS

Rest, Meals, Infant Feeding, Older Siblings, Renew and Recharge, Finding Friends, Mental Health, Returning to “Normal”

USING THE PLAN

This plan is intended as a starting point for discussions about how families will adjust to life with a new baby.

The goal of the Plan is to help parents identify resources BEFORE they are needed, thereby reducing stress and easing the transition period.

SPECIAL THANKS

PSI VT (a chapter of PSI, Inc.) recognizes and thanks Postpartum Support Virginia, DONA International, and Karen Kleiman of the postpartum Stress Center for many of the ideas in the Realistic Postpartum Plan.

DONA International. “Postpartum Plan.” DONA International. DONA International, 19 07 2011. Web. 18 05 2014. dona.org/pdfs/practicetopics/postpartum_plan.pdf.

Kleiman, Karen. *What Am I Thinking: Having a Baby After Postpartum Depression*. Xlibris Corporation, 2005. Print



1. Rest in the early days

During the first few weeks following the birth or adoption of a baby, new parents need extra help to meet individual sleep needs. **Each parent should aim for 5 hours of uninterrupted sleep to maintain normal functioning.** Support during the night, naps during the day, and tag-team parenting can all be effective tools for meeting important sleep needs.

Schedule this type of support for several weeks; identify several names for each time period. Potential Sources of help are family members, friends, doulas, and members of religious and/or community groups. Now is the time to strategize on how to fill gaps.

People available to help **during the day:**
(Include names and contact information)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

People available to help **during the night:**
(Include names and contact information)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

People available to help **during the evening hours** - especially important if the family has older siblings:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

People available to **“move in”** to provide extra support:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

2. Nutritious meals & adequate hydration

Achieving the most basic needs - eating and drinking healthfully - can be challenging when caring for a newborn. Holding, feeding, burping, rocking, changing, and swaddling leave little time to cook!

Plan for meals for the immediate postpartum period BEFORE baby arrives. Prepare meals in advance by “double-batching” when cooking in the weeks before the baby arrives, get signed up for a meal train, and identify delivery options if possible.

Plan to have meals prepared/delivered for the first ____ weeks after baby arrives.

Nutritious **meals to prepare** and freeze before baby arrives:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Grocery stores that offer online shopping, tools, pre-shopping, and/or delivery:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Nutritious and affordable **take-out or delivery** options:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

People who can **prepare and deliver** nutritious meals after baby arrives:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

[MealTrain.com](https://www.mealtrain.com) is a web-based tool to sign-up people to bring meals. Setting up a meal train is quick and easy.

3. Knowledgeable, empowering infant feeding support

Feeding a new baby can be a full-time job. The initial days can be especially challenging as parents and baby figure out what works. Feeding choices - breast, bottle, or both - do not have to be exclusive, nor do they need to be permanent. Some parents prefer one technique; others choose a hybrid-approach - a combination of breastfeeding, pumping, and formula-feeding - and re-evaluate as necessary

Each baby and each situation is unique. Choose what works best for you, your baby, and your family.

Breastfeeding is a natural process, but it does not always come naturally. Few mothers are blessed with a community of knowledgeable women to provide education, support, screening, and guidance on breastfeeding during the time it takes to establish good breastfeeding habits. However, the absence of these important people may lead to breastfeeding difficulties: painful nipples, inadequate milk supply, slow weight gain for baby, fussy babies, and a sense of isolation. These problems do not have to be part of early breastfeeding; appropriate support can prevent most difficulties. Take steps to ensure feeding gets off to a good start: identify and line up support!

Bottle feeding is also a learned skill and has many aspects, including (but not limited to): what water to use to reconstitute formula, what bottles are best, how to maintain vigilance regarding safety matters, what formula is best, how to ensure correct latch, what holding positions are best, how to time (or not time) feedings, how much to feed, how to store both pumped milk and formula, what methods of making up feeds while traveling are best... and many other aspects which do not even take into account issues that may arise due to individual health, medical, social, and emotional matters.

The following are excellent websites with information about infant feeding:

- Formula and bottle feeding information: Bottle Babies, bottlebabies.org
- Breastfeeding questions and answers: Kelly Mom, kellymom.com/category/bf/

Friends or relatives who will support and encourage infant feeding choices:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

People who are **supportive, informed, and up-to-date** about infant feeding choices, can answer questions, and will make helpful recommendations:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Local **postpartum doulas** who will visit and help with infant feeding:
(dona.org or cappa.net are reliable sources for postpartum doulas)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Local board certified **lactation consultants** who will help with infant feeding:
(ilca.org is a reliable source for lactation consultants)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Local **breastfeeding resources** which will provide both emotional support and quality breastfeeding support information.

Identify breastfeeding support groups, La Leche League Groups, places to purchase and/or rent breastfeeding supplies such as nursing bras and breast pumps, etc.
(ask OB, pediatrician, or midwife about these groups)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

4. Support for older siblings

Older children will experience a time of transition following the birth of a baby. Welcoming the baby with love and maintaining a loving, nurturing relationship with older children is the goal of all parents. **Planning ahead to ensure that older children have time to welcome their new sibling but still have special time with their parents is an important step in ensuring a smooth transition.**

People who can care for older children when mother goes into labor:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Needs of older children:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

People who will be able to spend quality time with older children, as well as drive them to school, daycare, and activities (names and contact information):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Times of day, **rituals, or special activities** to share with older children:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Specific **strategies** to lovingly blend this new baby with the existing family:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

5. Renewing and recharging: maintaining a sense of “self” and “us”

While the time spent together as a family is priceless, parents also need time to continue their own interests, as well as nurture their relationship as a couple. With a new baby, these things do not always happen easily or spontaneously. Many parents find that occasional time for “me” and “us” helps them to be more loving and better bonded with their baby, and as a family unit as a whole.

Loving, responsible **friends and family** who will provide occasional childcare:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Loving, responsible **professional childcare providers**:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Activities and “breathers” for **mother’s** rest, renewal, and re-energizing:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Activities and “breathers” for **partner’s** rest, renewal, and re-energizing:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Activities and “breathers” for **connecting as a couple**:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

6. Finding friends who are also parents of young babies

Common sense and life experience indicate that having someone who can empathize with experiences normalizes problems and makes them more bearable. Research confirms this concept. These friends will enhance life rather than replace existing support networks. Identify peers with young babies and strategize on where to find these friends. Suggestions include childbirth education classes, prenatal/postnatal fitness classes, breastfeeding support groups, other parent groups, common friends, online discussion groups, and houses of worship.

The following **friends, neighbors, and coworkers** have young babies:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Strategies for building a **support network** of friends who also have babies includes:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Local ongoing parent groups and regular events we will attend for **social support and peer connection** that fit our schedule:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

7. Mental health: It is of the HIGHEST importance

Anxiety and/or depression are the most common complications of childbirth and pregnancy and **may present in ways that we weren't expecting**. These illnesses - known as perinatal mood and anxiety disorders - **affect up to 1 in 5 women during pregnancy or the first year after giving birth**. Fortunately, these illnesses are temporary and respond well to treatment, which often includes self-care, social support, talk therapy, and medication when needed.

Postpartum Support International (PSI) (postpartum.net) is a non-profit whose mission is to promote awareness, prevention and treatment of mental health issues related to childbearing in every country worldwide. **Postpartum Support Vermont** is a state chapter of PSI.

There are also virtual communities available for both mothers and fathers:

Postpartum Men (postpartummen.com) is aimed at helping families overcoming PMADs by providing firsthand information and guidance through the experience of a PMAD.

Postpartum Progress (postpartumprogress.com) is the most widely-read blog in the United States addressing postpartum mood disorders.

PPD Onling Support Page is an online group offering information, advice, and assistance to those dealing with postpartum mood disorders, their families, friends, physicians, and counselors.

PSI (postpartum.net/Resources/PSI-Chat-with-an-Expert.aspx) hosts free, live phone sessions every week, including **Wednesday Chats for Moms** and first **Monday of the month Chats for Dads**. During these sessions you can connect with other moms and dads, and talk with a PSI expert about resources, symptoms, options and general information about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders from the privacy of our own phone or computer. There is no need to pre-register or give your name. These sessions, facilitated by licensed mental health professionals, are informational only and open to anyone with questions and concerns. Limited to the first 15 callers.

Talking with other women who have survived PMADs can be extremely helpful. **Social support groups** offer the opportunity to validate experiences, share coping strategies, and gain support and encouragement. Several support groups are active throughout

Knowledgeable, professional **mental health providers:**

PSI VT volunteer coordinators can help connect families with mental health professionals who specialize in working with new or expectant parents.

1.

2.

3.

Take time to assess your risk factors. Factors that can contribute to perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) are:

- The dramatic change in **hormone levels** occurring during pregnancy & postpartum
- Previous postpartum, or clinical depression
- Family history of depression
- Sleep deprivation
- Changes in thyroid function

Other risk factors include:

- Unplanned pregnancy
- Difficult pregnancy, labor, or delivery
- Colicky, difficult, or demanding baby
- Lack of social support after baby is born
- Anxiety about returning to work
- Issues surrounding breastfeeding
- Recent life crisis, such as serious illness or death in the family
- Unrealistic expectations, particularly about breastfeeding
- Certain personality traits, including perfectionist tendencies or handling transitions

8. Returning to “normal”

When is partner returning to work? Many families find that the transition to life with a new baby is easier if both parents are at home for a period of time, especially if the family includes older siblings. If both parents cannot be at home, perhaps a grandparent or other relative can provide support. However, each family is unique; identify what works best for you and your family.

If you are returning to work: When are you planning on returning to work? Is it realistic considering sleep deprivation of about 3 months and healing of 4-6 weeks? Is the plan flexible if something changes?

What are **childcare, babysitter, and daycare options?** Seek a high level of comfort about the person or people taking care of baby. Spend time with childcare providers in one or two hour chunks with baby and/or older children.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is the plan **for housekeeping and chores?** Identify the top 3 important tasks and who will be responsible.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are your thoughts and **greatest concerns** about this transition in your family and your ongoing approach to division of household tasks?

Partner _____ :

Partner _____ :

