

## Preparing for a Positive Postpartum Period

By Mara Acel-Green, LICSW

“The first month postpartum women should plan one activity and two naps per day.”\* While I know this may seem unrealistic in today’s world, it reminds us of how important this time is for women to focus on their own recovery both physically and emotionally from the intense changes experienced during pregnancy and the postpartum period. (Adoptive families can experience postpartum too!)

It is important to talk about the postpartum period with families to further buoy success rather than fan the flames of anxiety or concern. Let me first say that statistically most women do well after the first two weeks with a lot of support. That being said, approximately 80% of women experience the *Baby Blues*; for most women these feelings resolve within two weeks and do not require intervention. But, as most parents will tell you, parenting is still hard work! Statistics indicate that 1 in 8 women will experience postpartum depression and 1 in 5 will experience a depressive episode after their baby is born. (For more local resources see [www.postpartumma.org](http://www.postpartumma.org)) These self-reported statistics do not capture the women who do not disclose their difficulties to their providers or have other symptoms that interfere with their postpartum experience. The good news is that these are very treatable when addressed with appropriate care.

While the following does not prevent postpartum disorders, it is a great place to start. \*\* This list of teaser questions will help you begin thinking about your postpartum time. It is important to share this plan with your support people just as you share your labor plan. Reach out to your family and care providers as you complete this checklist and identify a professional if you need additional ideas. While it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes a village to raise the child’s family. Take the time to assemble your village.

### Nutrition and Nourishment

- Who will provide food for you and your partner to eat each meal for the first two weeks postpartum?
- Who will fill your refrigerator with healthy finger foods for you to eat while you nurse, pump, or feed the baby?
- Who will keep your water bottle full?

### Understanding

- Do you have local friends, family, or a professional support person as you take on your newly configured family? Does this include a therapist or a doula?
- Does your partner have support as well?

### Rest and Relaxation

- How is your sleep going now? If you need strategies and ideas for improving your sleep talk to your medical provider, doula, other parents, or a therapist.
- If you are not sleeping during the day after the baby comes, will you rest when the baby sleeps?

## **Spirituality**

- Times of great transition often require digging deep into ourselves to find strength to move forward. Do you have a spiritual practice that you do now that you want to continue during or after the birth?
- If you have a spiritual advisor do you want to ask her/him to make a home visit now or after the baby is born?
- Are you part of a faith based community that might be able to provide emotional or concrete supports like food, errands, or just keep you company?

## **Exercise**

- While important for overall health, it is essential to wait until you have been medically cleared for rigorous exercise. Please work closely with your medical providers to create a safe plan to start or resume exercising.

\* Quotation from Robin Snyder-Drummond of [birthready.com](http://birthready.com)

\*\*This checklist is modeled off the NURSE model created by Sichel and Driscoll.

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