



# HOW TO POSTPARTUM LIKE A BOSS

the ultimate guide to owning your postpartum  
(in a pandemic)

**WHY YOU NEED TO MAKE A  
POSTPARTUM PLAN (AND HOW)**

**HOW TO ASK FOR HELP (AND WHY)**

**WHERE TO GET HELP FOR PPD/PPA  
(AND WHAT THE SIGNS ARE)**

**WORKSHEETS, PRINTABLES, AND  
CHECKLISTS INCLUDED!**

*Nurtured*  
Postpartum  
by Sarah Wallace

# YOU NEED A PLAN

...and I'm not talking about a birth plan

Look, I get it. When you're pregnant, the To Do list seems incredibly daunting. It's exciting and overwhelming. Everywhere you look there are people telling you that you need to do something else to get ready for when your baby arrives. Buy this. Do that. Set up the nursery. Make the birth plan. Pack the hospital bag. Buy the diapers. Pick a baby name. Stay active. Wash all the baby clothes. Take a childbirth education class. Go for a hospital tour. It's a lot of stuff! And yes, some of it is incredibly exciting. But there's just so many things to check off that list. And now I'm telling you to do yet another thing. But trust me when I tell you - you **WILL** benefit from making a Postpartum Wellness Plan.

When you bring your baby home, that's when things get REAL real. Literally. From poopy diapers to the intense feelings of love to the overpowering knowledge that you are fully responsible for an entirely new human being - it's a lot! Oh, and we won't even touch the fact that usually our expectations and our realities simply do not match.

It can be so overwhelming for both you and your partner if you don't have systems put in place already. A postpartum plan helps you develop these systems ahead of time - before you're knee deep in diapers. It reduces your stress so that you can be more present.

Most importantly, a postpartum plan puts the needs of the birthing parent first. Yes, that's right. It's **not** all about the baby! Of course the baby matters. But the baby isn't **all** that matters. New parents need to be fed and cared for too - just like the baby! We all know that no matter what we do, people will come to meet and love on the baby. A postpartum plan ensures that the new parents ALSO get loved on.

Ultimately, making a postpartum plan for the Fourth Trimester helps us be mindful about the postpartum time. It gives us guidance for when we may feel lost, and it helps others to know how they can help us. But, most importantly, it ensures that we remember that not only was a baby born, but so was a family.

Creating a postpartum plan makes for a more positive postpartum experience.





# THE POSTPARTUM PLAN: THE BASICS

## 1) BUILD YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

Back in the day, we all had a close knit circle of people that would come and look after the birthgiver after a baby was born. Most folks just don't have this anymore in our society. So we need to build it again. You can do so by chatting with folks you meet at classes, or meetups and taking note of those that you connect with. At the same time, please give yourself permission to focus on your needs and your baby's needs. Building a support system does not mean that we are welcoming endless visitors into your home. You get to decide how you want people's help.

## 2) STOCK UP

Ensuring your pantry and cupboards are full of food that makes you feel good before you have your baby will help to fuel your body. Preparing big batches of freezer meals and healthy muffins in pregnancy makes feeding yourself in those early days much easier. If you're not a big cook, then there are often meal delivery services that you can take advantage of. Instead of baby gifts, consider asking friends and family to sign up to bring you meals (check out [mealtrain.com](http://mealtrain.com)). When stocking up, don't forget about the other basic necessities like toilet paper and laundry soap!



## 3) BOUNDARIES, BOUNDARIES, BOUNDARIES

This is the hardest part. Many folks have a hard time setting boundaries – and yet, it's so very important. So many of us have been socialized to make everyone around us happy. So when it comes down to needing to set a boundary about someone's smoking habit or sick kids or how long a relative can visit for, it feels really, really hard. Especially if the folks we are setting boundaries with are family.

So how can you communicate your boundaries?

Share things on social media and with loved ones that explain your values. Sharing poems, quotes, and blog posts can be an easy way to show how you want your early months home to look.

Write a letter from your baby – it's hard to argue with a baby!

Talk with your partner about household and financial responsibilities. Be open about your expectations. Unmet expectations can result in so much resentment – tell your support system your expectations! And as much as it seems like folks should naturally know some of these expectations – people around us are not mind readers. You need to tell them.

# THE POSTPARTUM PLAN: BEYOND THE BASICS

Okay, so we've talked about the three categories that are important to think about when making a postpartum plan. Our next step is to break it down a little more so we can actually make a plan.

## WHAT ARE YOUR RULES FOR THE EARLY POSTPARTUM?

What do you want your first few days postpartum to look like? Take awhile to imagine what you want this time to look like. Know that you do not get this time back.

What are your boundaries when it comes to visitors?

How do you want people to contact you?

Do you want some time with no/limited visitors? Remember, you will just have had a baby! You are not required to host ANYONE. You get to decide who comes into your home.

## HOW DO YOU WANT YOUR CIRCLE'S SUPPORT?

You have to figure out what you want help with so that you can tell people how they can help you. People want to help – they just don't always know how.

Set clear expectations surrounding visitors.

## DIVIDE AND DELEGATE TASKS

You may be home from work, but that doesn't mean you'll have more time. Baby care will take up the majority of your days. There will not be plenty of time for cooking and cleaning.

Set realistic expectations for all of the usual household tasks. Who's going to do what? Who's going to make sure YOU get fed and the bills get paid? Delegate!

If you have a partner, make sure that they know part of their job is to protect your boundaries!



## RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARTNER (IF YOU HAVE ONE)

How are you going to keep that connection strong? Even the little things make a difference! Build it into your day and it will all add up. Please don't get caught up in the day to day of newborn care and forget about your relationship. Research done by The Gottman Institute shows that relationship satisfaction declines by 67% after children. Yes, you read that right.

## LIST FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Who is available to help, how can they help, and when can they help? You never know when and what you'll need. Knowing ahead of time who you can contact reduces some major stress. Include a few people who you trust to bond with your baby.

## LIST PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Just in case! It's important to be prepared. You don't want to have to look for this information while you're in the depth of postpartum depression. Include your postpartum doula, lactation consultant, doctor, massage therapist, chiropractor, and any other professional you may use.

## WHERE CAN YOU GO WHEN YOU FEEL ISOLATED

New parenthood can be incredibly isolating. Where can you go to combat that? Think outside the box and include all the details (time and address!) for any programs!

## LIST THINGS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD

Include anything and everything! What makes you feel well? What makes you feel happy? Even the littlest things can make a difference.





## DIVIDE AND DELEGATE

If you have a partner, decide who is going to be responsible for what. Figure out a way that ensures that you both get time and space to reset. Maybe your partner is responsible for all diaper changes, and you for all feedings. Maybe you split up the hours in the day or night. Additionally, decide who will be responsible for the different household tasks. Who will do the laundry? Who will do the dishes? Who will cook? (Hint - it probably shouldn't be the birthgiver).

## WHERE TO GET HELP?

Many therapists are offering online therapy. See if yours is. If not, check out [www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net).

Many postpartum doulas and lactation consultants are offering virtual support as well.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN YOU FEEL ISOLATED?

You are going to feel isolated. I wish that I could say that you won't. But you will. It may be a comfort to know that you are not the only one isolated right now, or it may not be. Either way, it's still important to connect with people.

So, how can you connect when you can't CONNECT? FaceTime, Zoom, and Skype are all ways that you can SEE other people. Maybe you can connect your video chat with another person and then just hang out and have a coffee together. Maybe you each just clean your houses together.

Text/phone chats are also a great way to connect. You can be sure a postpartum doula will be available for you.

Many places are offering virtual "meetups" as well to help with the isolation.

Go for walks. Even just short ones around the block. Sunshine and fresh air can do wonders for mental health.



# THE POSTPARTUM PLAN: LOCKDOWN EDITION

In the event of a lockdown or major restrictions, your postpartum plan will need to change again. Depending on what the particular restrictions are in your area, you may or may not be allowed to have someone come into your home to support you. This doesn't change your need for support. In order to plan for this event, ask yourself the following questions.

## IS CHILD CARE ALLOWED?

If so, you could possibly arrange for someone to come and care for your other children or baby, while you sleep. This could even be something you hire a postpartum doula for. Ensure that any person who does come into the home follows all the precautions outlined in the previous pages, as well as whatever restrictions are in place in your area. And as the parent, you get to decide the risk level for your family.

## HOW ARE YOU GOING TO GET YOUR NECESSITIES?

If things have progressed to a lockdown status, you likely do not want to be taking your newborn out to a grocery store. So, think about how you will get your groceries in this event. Instacart? Curbside delivery? Maybe you can ask a friend to add your list to theirs?

## HOW WILL YOU STAY CONNECTED?

When a lockdown occurs, everything goes virtual. Luckily, there are lots of ways to connect virtually! Video chats via Zoom, Facetime, Skype, or Google Meets are all great. Even Facebook messenger has video chat capability. Maybe you stream a movie together with a friend on Netflix or Disney+.

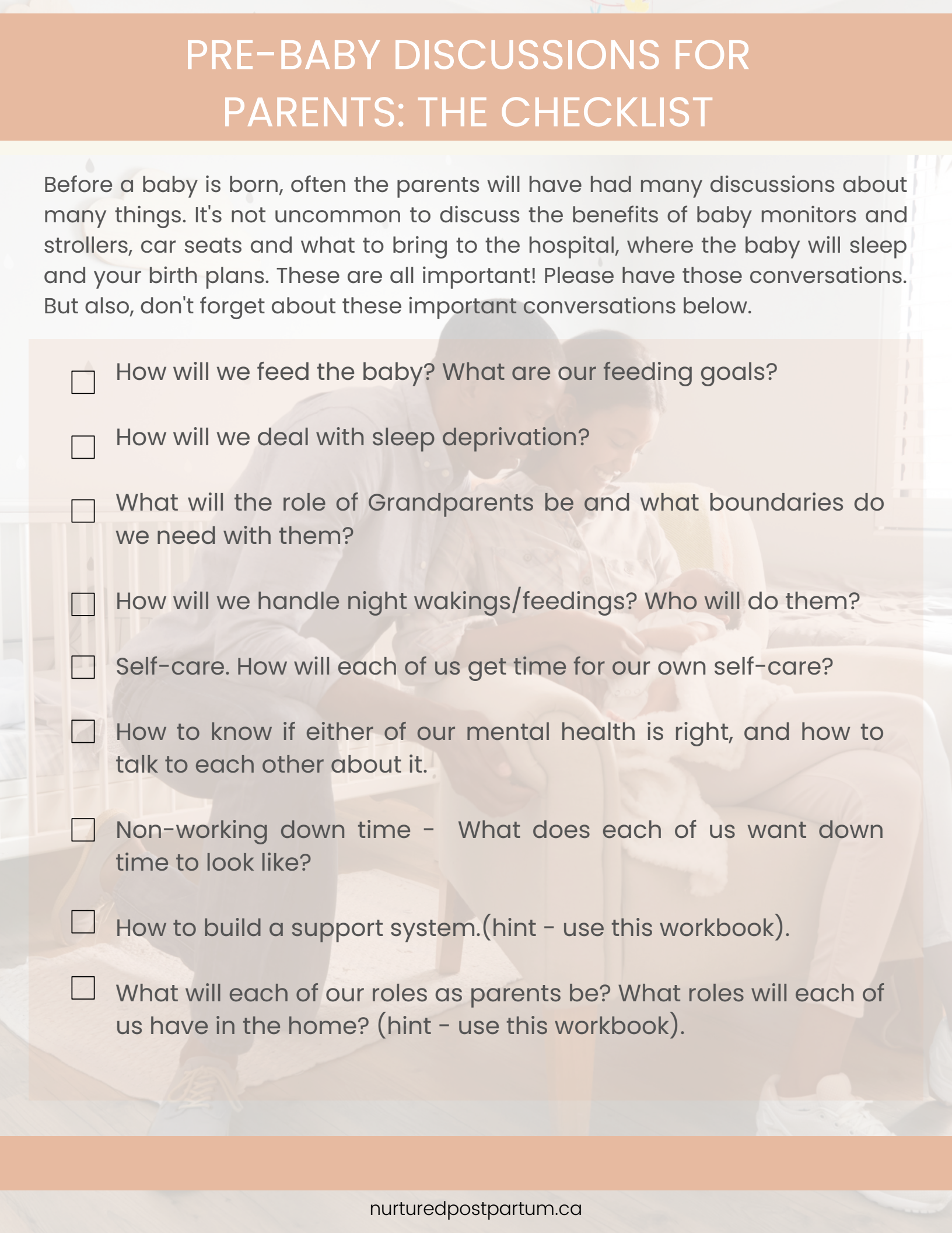
There's also many virtual groups for postpartum families out there.

Don't be afraid to reach out to others. They're likely needing your connection as well.



# PRE-BABY DISCUSSIONS FOR PARENTS: THE CHECKLIST

Before a baby is born, often the parents will have had many discussions about many things. It's not uncommon to discuss the benefits of baby monitors and strollers, car seats and what to bring to the hospital, where the baby will sleep and your birth plans. These are all important! Please have those conversations. But also, don't forget about these important conversations below.

- 
- A couple is sitting on a light-colored sofa. The man is on the left, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and dark pants, leaning forward and smiling at the baby. The woman is on the right, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and light-colored pants, also smiling at the baby. The baby is lying on the woman's lap, wrapped in a white blanket. The background is a bright, airy room with a window and some furniture.
- ☐ How will we feed the baby? What are our feeding goals?
  - ☐ How will we deal with sleep deprivation?
  - ☐ What will the role of Grandparents be and what boundaries do we need with them?
  - ☐ How will we handle night wakings/feedings? Who will do them?
  - ☐ Self-care. How will each of us get time for our own self-care?
  - ☐ How to know if either of our mental health is right, and how to talk to each other about it.
  - ☐ Non-working down time - What does each of us want down time to look like?
  - ☐ How to build a support system.(hint - use this workbook).
  - ☐ What will each of our roles as parents be? What roles will each of us have in the home? (hint - use this workbook).



# THE POSTPARTUM PLAN

...get it all down in one spot

## RULES FOR THE EARLY POSTPARTUM

## SUPPORT WANTED (WHAT/WHEN)

## TASK DIVISION

## RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTNER

LIST OF FAMILY/FRIENDS

LIST OF PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

PLACES TO GO WHEN ISOLATED

THINGS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD



# POSTPARTUM MUST HAVES: THE CHECKLIST

There are some definite postpartum must haves – and no, I’m not talking about anything to do with your actual baby. As a person who has just birthed a baby, no matter how that baby was born, there are some things that you need to have for you! You’ve just done an incredible thing. You’ve grown and birthed a tiny human! Your needs matter too. Don’t just focus on your baby’s needs – ensure that you have these postpartum must haves before your baby arrives!

- ☐ DEPENDS – perfect for the first days postpartum.
- ☐ BELLY WRAP – a supportive garment (not too tight!) can help hold things in place for those first few days postpartum.
- ☐ PADS – skip dry weave pads to avoid stitches getting stuck in it.
- ☐ STOCKED HOUSEHOLD ITEMS – don't forget toilet paper!
- ☐ HIGH WAIST PANTIES – grab some cheap ones that you won't worry about ruining!
- ☐ COMFORTABLE CLOTHES – you probably won't be back in your pre-pregnancy clothes for awhile. Make sure to have easy to access clothes if you plan to nurse.
- ☐ PERI BOTTLE – given in hospital, but you can use any squeeze bottle. Use it after birth to ease discomfort while urinating.
- ☐ FOOD OR MEAL SERVICE – check out [mealtrain.com](http://mealtrain.com) to make this easier
- ☐ PERINEAL SPRAY – purchased or DIY, a spray eases perineal discomfort
- ☐ SET UP A FEEDING/CHANGING STATION – include a comfortable chair, snacks, and books for you!
- ☐ PADSICLES – make enough for the first week
- ☐ POSTPARTUM BIRTHWORKER – Support postpartum is so important, and a postpartum doula can help fill the gaps that your friends and family can't.
- ☐ WITCH HAZEL PADS – helps to ease perineal discomfort
- ☐ WATER BOTTLE WITH A STRAW – makes it easier to stay hydrated when holding a sleeping newborn!
- ☐ CONSTIPATION BUSTERS – either natural foods or an over the counter stool softener

# VIRTUAL POSTPARTUM SUPPORT

Not sure where to find virtual support postpartum? It can be difficult to find what you need when you're looking on Google. Here's a handy list that will help narrow it down. Make sure to check out supports that are local to you first!

LOCAL POSTPARTUM BIRTHWORKER - many doulas are offering virtual support. Check your local doula association or contact me.

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH CLINIC - call directly

YOUR DOCTOR - many doctors are providing phone appointments, check to see if yours is one

POSTPARTUM SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL - online postpartum support meetings ([www.postpartum.net/get-help/psi-online-support-meetings](http://www.postpartum.net/get-help/psi-online-support-meetings)) or call 1-800- 944-4773

PHONE APPS - apps like TalkSpace or Betterhelp bring therapy online and make it more accessible

LOCAL LACTATION CONSULTANT - many will offer support over the phone

POSTPARTUM PREP SESSION - virtual class taught prenatally to help you get ready ([nurturedpostpartum.ca](http://nurturedpostpartum.ca))

LA LECHE LEAGUE - phone/email your local leader, or submit a question online ([www.lllc.ca/get-help/submit-question](http://www.lllc.ca/get-help/submit-question))

LOCAL YOGA AND FITNESS SPACES - many are leading workouts and yoga classes virtually

EMPOWERED POSTPARTUM - free and paid virtual postpartum support groups ([www.empoweredpostpartum.org/support-groups](http://www.empoweredpostpartum.org/support-groups))



# SIGNS OF PERINATAL MOOD DISORDERS

Perinatal mood disorders don't single out birthgivers. They can affect anyone from birth givers and partners to adoptive parents and surrogates - even awesome ones! Between 40-85% of birthgivers will experience baby blues, and about 10-20% of new parents will experience a perinatal mood disorder. Yes, it's that common!

But what's normal, and what isn't? It can be exhausting being a parent to a new baby. Don't hesitate to reach out if you are not sure. You do NOT have to do this all alone.

## BABY BLUES

- o Mood swings
  - o Irritability
  - o Sadness
  - o Crying
  - o Appetite changes
  - o Fatigue
  - o Inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Passes after about 2 weeks



It's not all postpartum depression!  
You can also struggle from postpartum anxiety, postpartum OCD, PTSD, panic disorder, mania, and postpartum psychosis.



## PERINATAL MOOD DISORDERS

- o Severe mood swings
  - o Excessive crying
  - o Difficulty bonding with your baby
  - o Social withdrawal
  - o Appetite changes
  - o Inability to concentrate or make decisions
  - o Fatigued but can't sleep
  - o Reduced interest and pleasure in activities
  - o Intense irritability, anger, or rage
  - o Fear that you're not a good parent
  - o Feeling worthless, shame, guilt or inadequate
  - o Severe anxiety and panic attacks
  - o Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide
- Improves with professional support

## WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

Call your doctor as soon as possible if the signs and symptoms of depression:

- o Don't fade after two weeks
- o Are getting worse
- o Make it hard for you to care for your baby
- o Make it hard to complete everyday tasks
- o Include thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

# POSTPARTUM MENTAL WELLNESS SCALE

Use this checklist to help you monitor your mental health status in the postpartum period. Record the number that best describes the frequency that you experience the following symptoms.

Never = 0   Sometimes = 1  
Often = 2   Always = 3

## Green Zone

Some of these thoughts will naturally occur during the first 6 weeks. Be aware if they are persistent throughout your day and continue week after week. **Values:** 0-12 & 13-24 monitor closely & talk to someone, 25-26 seek help.

DATE		
I can't sleep, even when baby is sleeping		
I am experiencing headaches and/or migraines		
I feel short of breath		
I am overwhelmed by my thoughts		
I can't sit still or relax		
I feel like I am "losing it"		
I feel that other people think I am failing		
I want to be alone		
I don't enjoy things like I used to		
I feel numb and disconnected		
I don't feel like I am bonding with my baby		
I don't feel "in love" with my baby		
TOTAL		

## Yellow Zone

You may naturally experience some of these thoughts or feelings, however they tend to be less common and should be monitored closely. **Values:** 0-12 & 13-24 monitor closely & talk to someone, 25-26 seek help.

DATE		
I feel sluggish, like I'm dragging myself around		
I feel weighed down		
I have no appetite		
I feel a constant "pit" in my stomach		
I have been experiencing stomach aches and/or back aches		
I feel like I can't focus or concentrate on anything		
I feel anxious and/or worried		
I feel sad and I cry for no apparent reason		
I feel like I am not good at this "parent" thing		
I'm having trouble getting out of bed		
I don't feel like socializing		
I feel overwhelmed		
TOTAL		

## Red Zone

These symptoms are severe and require immediate medical intervention. Please do not hesitate to seek help, or attempt to manage them on your own. **Values:** 1-39 seek help immediately.

DATE		
I am experiencing panic attacks		
I am having scary thoughts that include harming myself, my baby or others		
I have SERIOUS thoughts about harming myself, my baby or others		
I feel like a failure and that my baby would be better off without me		
I feel like a burden and that my family would be better off without me		
I self-medicate with alcohol, drugs or other substances		
I feel like I am hearing or seeing things that other people do not see or hear		
I think that other people want to hurt me and/or my baby		
I feel low, tearful, hopeless, empty inside		
I feel anger and rage that I have never felt before		
I feel anger and/or resentment towards my baby		
I am afraid to be alone with my baby		
I wish that I didn't have a baby		
TOTAL		



# WHERE TO GET HELP

Here are a few places where you can go to get help. Depending on your location, there will be more! Reach out to a local postpartum birthworker for resources in your area.

## PERINATAL MOOD DISORDERS HELP

Your doctor or any walk in clinic

Canadian Mental Health Association Distress Line - call 211

Postpartum Support International - 1.800.944.4PDD (4773)

- [www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net)

Pacific Postpartum Support Society - 1.855.255.7999

(phone, available M-F 10 am to 3 pm)

- 1.604.255.7999

(text available W/F)

Better Help (online counselling) - [www.betterhelp.com](http://www.betterhelp.com)

Health Link (BC) - call 811

Olivia Scobie - [oliviascobie.com](http://oliviascobie.com)

## LACTATION SUPPORT

La Leche League support & meetings - [www.lllc.ca](http://www.lllc.ca)

Jack Newman Clinic - [www.drjacknewman.com](http://www.drjacknewman.com)

Kelly Mom - [kellymom.com](http://kellymom.com)

## POSTPARTUM CARE

Sarah Wallace at Nurtured Postpartum - [nurturedpostpartum.ca](http://nurturedpostpartum.ca)

DoulaMatch - [doulamatch.net](http://doulamatch.net)

# WHAT TO READ: BOOKS, WEBSITES, AND APPS

- 
- The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding by La Leche League
  - Sweet Sleep by La Leche League
  - Breastfeeding Made Simple by Kathleen A. Kendall
  - Guide to Breastfeeding by Dr. Jack Newman
  - The First Forty Days by Heng Ou
  - The Fourth Trimester by Kimberly Ann Johnson
  - The Wonder Weeks by Frans X. Plooij and Hetty van de Rijt (The Wonder Weeks App is also available on both Apple and Android)
  - [www.askdrsears.com](http://www.askdrsears.com)
  - [jessiemandell.com](http://jessiemandell.com)
  - [kellymom.com](http://kellymom.com)
  - [oliviascobie.com](http://oliviascobie.com)
  - [nurturedpostpartum.ca](http://nurturedpostpartum.ca)

# DOOR SIGN FOR GUESTS

Cut out on dotted line and fold in half. Display on your door with the desired side facing out.



## Visitors Welcome

Please help us keep  
our baby healthy.



wash your hands  
no strong perfumes  
please stay away if sick

*Nurtured*  
Postpartum  
by Sarah Wallace

[nurturedpostpartum.ca](http://nurturedpostpartum.ca)



## Sleeping Baby

Please do not knock  
– or –  
ring the bell.

CALL OR TEXT INSTEAD.

Please no unexpected  
visitors.



Please leave  
packages at the door.

NO SOLICITING



Need support creating your plan or in the postpartum? Don't hesitate to contact me!

[nurturedpostpartum.ca](http://nurturedpostpartum.ca)

[hello@nurturedpostpartum.ca](mailto:hello@nurturedpostpartum.ca)

 [@nurturedpostpartumco](https://www.instagram.com/nurturedpostpartumco)       [facebook.com/NurturedPostpartumCo](https://www.facebook.com/NurturedPostpartumCo)



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