

Postpartum Care:

A THOUGHTFUL GUIDE & CHECKLIST

INTRODUCTION

Postpartum Days. There's always some form of leakage, be it blood, sweat or milk. There's so much thirst and regular appetite. There's ice packs, high cut granny underwear, and endless pads. There's the height of self care in the form of a five minute hot shower. There's tiredness and there's pain but both quickly get overshadowed by the love. The love! Oh THE love. Words cannot describe how this love suffocates you and literally IS the oxygen you breathe all at the same time.

The uncertainty of what the night will bring. The lack of sleep. The haze that literally surrounds your head like a cloud. Your thoughts are mush, and you can't really focus on anything else but this sweet new life that is attached to you like an extra limb. You want to show her off to the world, yet you're selfish and in no rush to do so. Wanting to protect her, guard her, never put her down or let her out of your sight. You listen to her breathing. You stare at her for, what feels like, hours. You trace the outline of her body and admire the miniature, yet perfect features that make her her. You are in awe. In disbelief. A true miracle.

And it is a miracle. Every single time. No matter whether it's your first child or your fifth. The magic does not subside in any shape or form. In fact, it may just get stronger, as you prepare your heart to accept that this child is probably your last. Everything feels heightened, more real. You take it ALL in and leave nothing for granted.

In memory of these most treasured days, I have put together a Postpartum Care Guide & Checklist. If you are reading this, this may very well be your first time finding your way through these haze and love-filled days. Remember, every postpartum journey is unique. Listen to your body, communicate with your partner and support network around you (healthcare provider, midwife, doula, etc.), and give yourself grace during this transition.

COMFORT AND HEALING



- ☐ **Peri Bottle:** Gently cleanses the perineal area, reducing discomfort during bathroom visits.
- ☐ **Maternity Pads:** Essential for managing postpartum bleeding in the initial weeks.
- ☐ **Postpartum Underwear:** Provides comfort and accommodates postpartum pads securely.
- ☐ **Ice Packs or Padsicles:** Help reduce swelling and soothe perineal discomfort.
- ☐ **Witch Hazel Pads or Spray:** Alleviate inflammation and discomfort in the perineal area.
- ☐ **Sitz Bath:** Promotes healing and provides relief for perineal soreness.
- ☐ **Pain Relief Medication:** Over-the-counter options like ibuprofen or paracetamol can help manage pain; consult your healthcare provider for recommendations. For c-section recovery, follow your healthcare provider's pain-relief recommendations.
- ☐ **Stool Softeners:** Ease bowel movements and prevent straining, especially if you've had perineal stitches.
- ☐ **Belly Bandit or Compression Garments:** Wearing a Belly Bandit tummy belt (or other compression garments) can provide support and help you feel more secure.

** Please note that some items listed above are only relevant for vaginal births, but otherwise all are relevant for both C-section and vaginal births.*

** Your motherhood will outlive you and live inside your children forever.*

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

- ❑ **Nursing Bras:** Offer comfort and easy access for breastfeeding.
- ❑ **Nursing Pads:** Prevent leaks and protect clothing.
- ❑ **Nipple Cream:** Soothes and heals sore or cracked nipples.
- ❑ **Nursing Pillow:** Absolute essential item. Breastfeeding, and getting it right, takes time the first time around. Be willing to experiment to find the positions that work for you and your baby.
- ❑ **The Haakaa:** A silicon suction cup (breast pump) that you can attach to your unused breast when nursing. It catches milk and is one of the best breastfeeding hacks to be invented.
- ❑ **Breast Pump and Storage Bags:** Facilitate milk expression and storage for future feedings.
- ❑ **Nipple Covers:** Allow your nipples to breathe and heal while wearing a shirt.
- ❑ **Lactation Consultant Contact:** Consider booking a session before baby arrives to learn techniques and ask questions. Not every hospital offers this as a service.
- ❑ **Hydration:** Keep a water bottle handy always (one with a straw) to stay hydrated.
- ❑ **Healthy Snacks:** Nutrient-rich foods support energy levels and healing.
- ❑ **Prenatal Vitamins:** Continue as advised by your healthcare provider to support recovery and breastfeeding.
- ❑ **Jungle Juice Recipe:** A popular South African concoction said to boost milk production and energy.
- ❑ **Fennel Tea:** It is considered to increase the quality and quantity of breastmilk. Make sure you always have a thermos of this comforting tea warm and ready to go, day and night.



CLOTHING

- ❑ **Nursing-friendly Loungewear:** Button down loungewear/pyjamas. Soft, high-waisted leggings. Warm socks. Comfy slippers. Or anything soft and comfortable that allows easy access for nursing.
- ❑ **A Lightweight Robe:** Invest in a cozy robe that makes you feel hugged and loved. You will live in it the first few weeks.
- ❑ **Eye-Mask:** A large, silk eye-mask (ie Dore & Rose) can work wonders on your nervous system.
- ❑ **Baby Sling:** A soft baby-wearing sling or wrap.

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

- ❑ **Your Partner:** Aka, your super hero in those first weeks. Make sure you have your partner giving you the space to rest, bringing you nourishing food, filling up your water bottle, bringing you warm herbal tea and being there for a hug whenever you need one.
 - ❑ **Support System:** Stay connected with your family, friends, or virtual support groups to share experiences and feelings.
 - ❑ **Rest:** Prioritize sleep and rest whenever possible to aid recovery. Easier said than done, I know.
 - ❑ **Skin to Skin:** With your baby is extremely powerful. It has an impact on your hormonal mix and can lead to both you and your baby being more calm and relaxed.
 - ❑ **Professional Support:** Seek help from a midwife, a postpartum doula or counselor if needed. This period can feel extremely lonely. Have the tools and support system to feel strong when extra strength is needed.
 - ❑ **Placenta Pills:** Some mothers find that encapsulating their placenta helps with postpartum recovery and mood stabilization.
 - ❑ **Journaling/Memory Keeping:** Light that candle, make your favourite tea and journal this journey and your feelings (they are all consuming and overwhelming!). Or take out your Baby Book, if this brings you joy, and write down your birth story and your very first memories with your precious newborn.
 - ❑ **Diffuser:** 'Baby-approved' essential oils, or a salt lamp in your room can give such comfort.
 - ❑ **Sound Machine:** Works wonders for both mama and baby at night. Also consider fairy lights or a soft dimmed light for those nighttime feeds.
 - ❑ **Pause Social Media:** Consider taking a break from social media, allowing you to be fully present with your own needs and those of your baby's.
 - ❑ **Vitamin D:** Get outside time on your own and soak up some vitamin D.
 - ❑ **Netflix & Chill:** Treat yourself to a series you love, binge and enjoy.
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HOUSEHOLD AIDS

- ❑ **Meal Preparation:** Consider preparing and freezing meals ahead of time or arranging a meal train with your loved ones. Nothing beats a friend bringing you a homecooked meal!
 - ❑ **Help with Chores:** Don't hesitate to accept assistance with household tasks to focus on recovery and bonding with your baby. Consider hiring extra cleaning and laundry help in those early weeks after birth.
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FINAL THOUGHTS

One final note, which may be the most important note of this entire Postpartum Guide. The way you take care of yourself in your first postpartum month, can determine how you will feel for the entire first year! I urge you to treat those first 4 weeks as your holy grail in motherhood. It is a bubble that you can control and protect, if you want to. My recommendation is, above all else, prioritize this bubble for the first four weeks. Prioritize rest, bonding with your baby, focus on your breastfeeding and focus on your own rhythm & needs. Stay in bed for 5 days, stay on your bed for another 5 days, and stay close to bed for another 5 days. Say no to any visitors (*unless someone is briefly there to drop off a cooked meal*) until YOU are ready. This is not only your holy grail period with your precious newborn, but I truly believe that taking it slow and focusing on only yourself and your newborn in that first month, allows you to feel more rested, have a smoother ride in your breastfeeding journey (*lots of practice and no distractions*), and strengthens your bond with your baby.

stellar x

*make every moment count
