

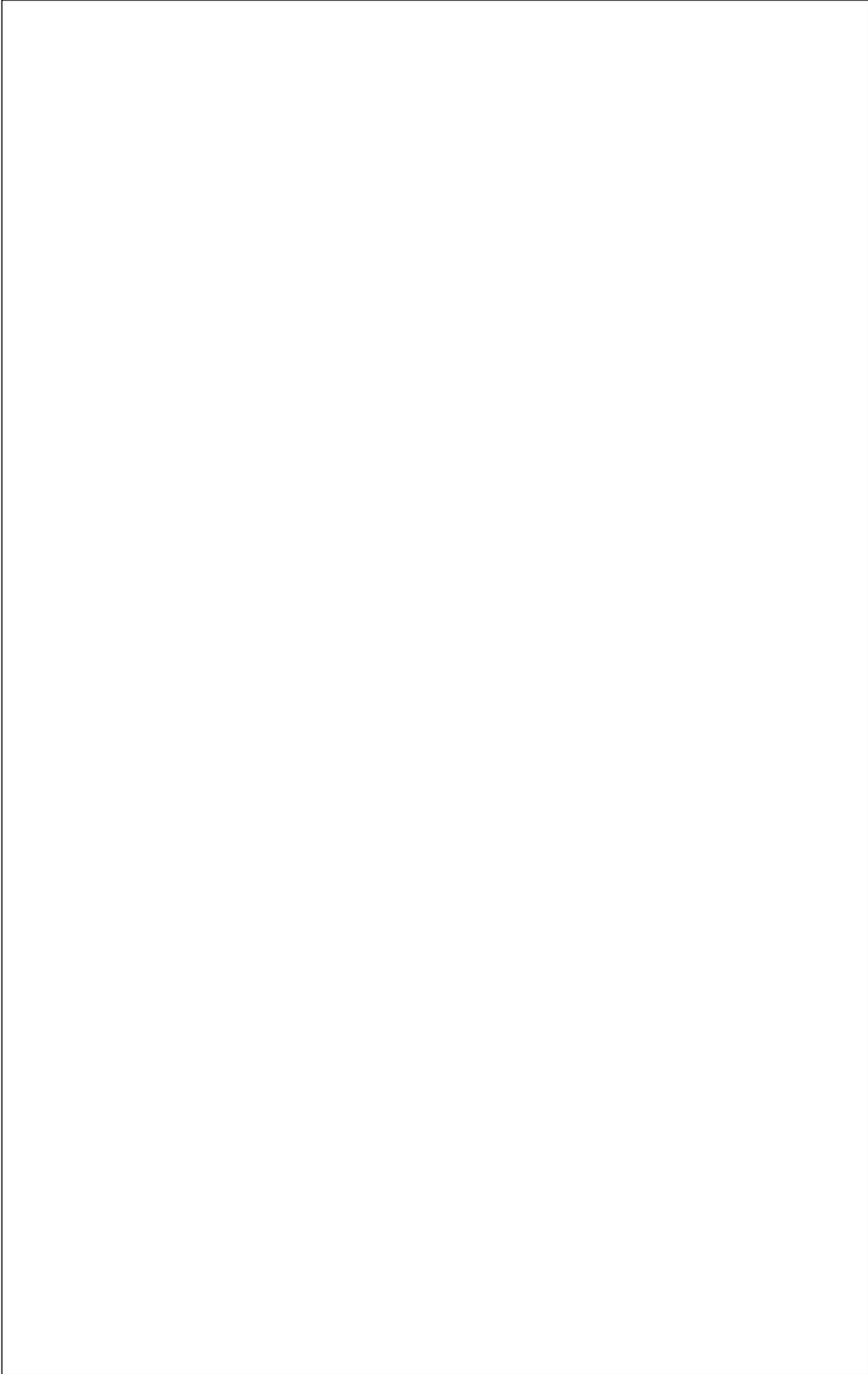


## Post-partum Plan for Self Care



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**One of the most important steps in feeling well and staying well after your baby arrives is to take care of yourself – even in small ways.**

It is very easy to get swept up in the round-the-clock needs of a newborn and forget or neglect your own needs.

Since the first few weeks can be intense, it is helpful to educate yourself, take stock of your resources in advance, and make a plan to address how you will take care of yourself. You may have to do some brainstorming and get creative and the best laid plans may go awry. However, setting the intention to make self-care a priority and planning ahead frees up valuable energy that you can use to enjoy being a parent.

Should you have any questions regarding your post-partum experience or need additional support, please contact us at [Midwifery@UVMHealth.org](mailto:Midwifery@UVMHealth.org) or (802) 847-1400.





## How to Manage the First Weeks

The first and most important thing to remember is, looking after yourself equals looking after your baby. If you do not take care of yourself, you cannot give your baby the best care. When creating your Postpartum Plan, you will include these components:

- Expectations
- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Exercise and Time for Yourself
- Emotional Support
- Practical Support

## Expectations

After baby comes, there is more to do and less time to do it. One of the areas that can cause stress the first few weeks is determining how to divide up household jobs and parenting responsibilities. Before the baby arrives, it will be easier on you to sort out, what your expectations are, what really will need to be done, and who will do it.

Here are two separate worksheets on postpartum expectations, one for the pregnant mom and one for the partner. Use these lists to check your individual expectations and start a discussion. Fill out the questions on your own and then compare with your partner's. This will be useful information for making the rest of your Postpartum Plan.

**Keep in mind** that these lists are just a place to start and offer some ideas. Add or subtract as needed. The needs of your household may look very different. You may have other children or family members or responsibilities. Keep it very simple with the awareness that you may have to lower your housekeeping standards for a time as the demands of a newborn are primary and time consuming!

- Think about what absolutely needs to be done.
- What can you agree to not do for while?
- Consider making a list of family, friends, coworkers or professionals that can help, even before you really need it!

Additionally, this is not just for couples; it can work to open a discussion for however your family is structured.



## **POSTPARTUM EXPECTATIONS: PREGNANT MOM**

While the baby's needs are being met, who will usually do the following?

- **Shop for groceries/household/baby items:**
  - Put away
- **Meals:**
  - Planning
  - Preparation
- **Clean up after meals:**
  - Wash the dishes, load and start the dish washer
  - Put the dishes away
  - Clean the kitchen: Put away food, clean sink, wipe counters and stove, sweep and mop the floor, take out the trash.
- **Laundry (there will be more after baby!):**
  - Wash laundry. How often?
  - Dry laundry. Fold. Put away.
- **Daily household tasks:**
  - Pick up and put away
  - Vacuum and dust
  - Clean the bathroom
- **Take care of the pets:**
- **Pay bills:**
- **Household maintenance:**
  - Repairs
  - Mowing, shoveling, garden care
- **Baby related tasks:**
  - Cleaning and emptying the diaper pail.
  - Cleaning and maintenance of baby equipment.

**Complete the following sentences or use them as a topic of discussion:**

1. I think becoming a mother will make me feel more: \_\_\_\_\_
2. I think becoming parent will make my partner feel more: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Becoming parents will change our relationship. I imagine my partner will be more \_\_\_\_\_ toward me/us.
4. I think I will be \_\_\_\_\_ toward my partner.
5. I am most concerned about: \_\_\_\_\_
6. I think my partner is most concerned about: \_\_\_\_\_
7. I imagine childcare being shared in this way: \_\_\_\_\_
8. I imagine my partner sees childcare being shared in this way: \_\_\_\_\_
9. When my parents become grandparents, I expect them to be: \_\_\_\_\_
10. When my partner's parents become grandparents, I think they will be:  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. As a new parent, my relationship with my/my partner's parents will:  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. As a new parent, I think my partner's relationship with our parents will:  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. I imagine our friends and social life will:  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. I imagine my partner thinks our friends and social life will: \_\_\_\_\_
15. During the time-consuming first year of her baby's life, I know I will have to make sacrifices. Yes / No
16. What I will miss the most is: \_\_\_\_\_
17. I think my partner will miss: \_\_\_\_\_
18. I think that the partner's role in the baby feeding relationship is: \_\_\_\_\_
19. I think my partner views the role as: \_\_\_\_\_



## **POSTPARTUM EXPECTATIONS: PARTNER**

While the baby's needs are being met, who will usually do the following?

- **Shop for groceries/household/baby items:**
  - Put away
- **Meals:**
  - Planning
  - Preparation
- **Clean up after meals:**
  - Wash the dishes, load and start the dish washer
  - Put the dishes away
  - Clean the kitchen: Put away food, clean sink, wipe counters and stove, sweep and mop the floor, take out the trash.
- **Laundry (there will be more after baby!):**
  - Wash laundry. How often?
  - Dry laundry. Fold. Put away.
- **Daily household tasks:**
  - Pick up and put away
  - Vacuum and dust
  - Clean the bathroom
- **Take care of the pets:**
- **Pay bills:**
- **Household maintenance:**
  - Repairs
  - Mowing, shoveling, garden care
- **Baby related tasks:**
  - Cleaning and emptying the diaper pail.
  - Cleaning and maintenance of baby equipment.

**Complete the following sentences or use them as a topic of discussion:**

1. I think becoming a parent will make me feel more: \_\_\_\_\_
2. I think becoming a mother will make her feel more: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Becoming parents will change our relationship. I imagine my partner will be more \_\_\_\_\_ toward me/us.
4. I think I will be \_\_\_\_\_ toward her.
5. I am most concerned about: \_\_\_\_\_
6. I think she is most concerned about: \_\_\_\_\_
7. I imagine childcare being shared in this way: \_\_\_\_\_
8. I imagine she sees childcare being shared in this way: \_\_\_\_\_
9. When my parents become grandparents, I expect them to be: \_\_\_\_\_
10. When her parents become grandparents, I think they will be:  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. As a new parent, my relationship with my/her parents will:  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. As a new parent, I think my partner's relationship with my/her parents will: \_\_\_\_\_
13. I imagine our friends and social life will:  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. I imagine my partner thinks our friends and social life will: \_\_\_\_\_
15. During the time-consuming first year of her baby's life, I know I will have to make sacrifices. Yes / No
16. What I will miss the most is: \_\_\_\_\_
17. I think she will miss: \_\_\_\_\_
18. I think that the partner's role in the baby feeding relationship is: \_\_\_\_\_
19. I think she views my role as: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sleep



Sleep is essential to stay health and to heal. To heal the body from pregnancy, labor, and birth takes a certain amount and quality of sleep. Pregnancy and giving birth are major biological, psychosocial, and emotional experiences. Please respect these changes and allow

your entire body, to heal through quality sleep.

### SLEEP QUESTIONNAIRE

- How much sleep do I normally need to feel healthy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Does my sleeping area promote sleep?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What tools have I used to sleep in the past? Bedtime routines, self-soothing or relaxation techniques?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Newborns are awake a lot at night. Educate yourself on normal newborn behavior and soothing techniques. Review resources listed on your Postpartum Resources sheet.
- Sleep when the baby sleeps.
- Ask for help from friends and family to get more sleep.
- Plan nights with your partner or family and share the responsibilities. Brainstorm on what that might look like:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** If you can't sleep when you have the opportunity to sleep, check in with your Nurse-Midwife, Obstetrician and Primary Care Provider

## Nutrition

Healthy nutrition is important for general healing and emotional wellbeing. Unfortunately new moms may feel pressed for time and neglect this essential element of self-care. Make sure you have a small healthy meal and something to drink every 3 to 4 hours. Remember that this is part of taking good care of your baby.

Plan ahead before the baby comes by:

- Stocking the freezer with casseroles.
- Having friends bring meals, set up a “meal train” or help you keep the fridge stocked. Review resources listed on your Postpartum Resources sheet for additional information.
- Making a list of quick healthy mini meals.

After the baby comes it will be important to know how much you are eating in a 24 hour time span. Keep track of all meals, snacks and drinks in the table below to ensure that you’re eating enough.

### MY NUTRITION TRACKING

Date	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks	Drinks



## Exercise and Time For Yourself

After the basic needs of sleep and nutrition are met, this one will evolve over time. Putting it in the Postpartum Plan ensures that you consider it a part of the healthy transition to parenthood and that it is worthy of your time.

Time for self can be built in to your day in the first weeks. It can be as simple as 15 minutes alone to shower, checking in with friends by email, or having someone watch the baby while you go out to the mail box. Sometimes you will need a break from the baby, to spend time alone, or some time with others. Exercise is known to improve health and well-being and can be gradually added as you heal physically.

As you become physically able walking even small amounts each day are worth the planning. Walking is valuable as exercise and for the change of scenery.

Jot down some simple things that give you pleasure, are relaxing or soothing, that you can do in small amount of time. Refer to this list when you need some motivation for time for self.

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## Emotional Support

Take stock of your emotional supports. Put together a list of people whose support you will find helpful. What can each person can offer you? Plan how you will connect. For example:

- Your mother-in-law is a resource for infant advice. Would she call you each evening?
- Your girlfriend is a good listener and makes you laugh. Plan weekly short visits and/or phone calls.

Ideally, there should be someone who you can fully confide in within the list.

You may find that you would like to add to or round out your list. Parenthood is a particularly good time to connect with other parents. Check out local resources as listed on your Postpartum Resources sheet.

You may also find this is a good opportunity to schedule a visit with a professional counselor.

### MY SUPPORT LIST

Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

Family: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Friends: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Co-workers: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parents that I know: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Professionals:

- Therapists
- Visiting Nurse
- Pediatric Providers
- Midwife/OB/Primary Care Providers

## Practical Support

You will need practical support, as well as emotional. Help with the household, meals, errands, childcare, and support for you to care for yourself. These lists may overlap but practical and emotional supports deserve to be addressed separately.

Complete and review the Postpartum Expectations worksheets on pages 4 and 6 of this brochure. Take stock of what it takes to run your household before the baby arrives. Baby demands are 24/7. Determine essential jobs and how to divide up the increased work.

Ask for and accept help from family and friends- even before you really need it. List chores and plan who will do them. A list can also be valuable for when someone asks "How can I help?"

If you can afford it, this may be a time to hire a doula or household help. Gift certificates would be good baby shower requests!

### MY PRACTICAL SUPPORT

Essential Household Tasks	Person Assigned
Sibling/Childcare	
Shopping/Errands	
Laundry	
Kitchen	
Bathroom	
Pet care	
Other	

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