

# What A Woman Should Know

About the Postpartum Weeks of Pregnancy

## New Parents' Survival Guide

### **BABY SAFE!** **Don't Forget ...**

*Babies ALWAYS ride in a car seat!* The safest place is the BACK SEAT. Be sure you know how to fasten it properly in the car, and check to be sure the baby is fastened in the seat correctly.

*Hot water can burn a baby's delicate skin.* Turn the water heater down to 120° F and check the water temperature before putting the baby in the tub.

*Don't ever turn your back on baby* while on the changing table or in the tub. Drowning and falls can occur in the blink of an eye.

*Sun and heat exposure can be deadly for a small child.* Protect your baby with sunscreen, light clothing and a cap or hat, and shaded protection. Be sure baby is drinking plenty of fluids and avoid long exposure to heat and sun.

*Small toys, objects and even food can cause a baby or small child to choke.*

*Protect your baby from disease by keeping immunizations up to date.* The first set of immunizations are given at about two months of age. Your baby's doctor will tell you what immunizations to get and when to get them to protect your baby against diseases like polio, hepatitis, mumps and others that can be life-threatening to a small child. ☞

The first few days and weeks at home with a new baby can be filled with conflicting feelings of excitement, pride, anxiety and exhaustion. The best way to enjoy this early postpartum period is to take it easy and keep things simple.

☞ *Relax and take care of your baby.* Ask a relative, friend or mother's helper to do the shopping, cooking, laundry and housework.

☞ *Eat right.* Nutritious food is essential for the healing process your body undergoes after childbirth and for breastfeeding.

☞ *Nap when your baby naps.* Nighttime feedings make it important that you catch up on lost sleep during the day. Avoid the temptation to busy yourself with other tasks while the baby naps. Fatigue can quickly make the demands of taking care of a newborn seem overwhelming.

☞ *Limit visitors* to one or two close family members or friends – ones who will pitch in and help. You should not feel obligated to entertain people who drop by to see the baby. Hang a "Mom & Baby Sleeping" sign on the door, and don't answer it! The same approach can be taken with the phone. Let the answering machine take the message.

☞ *Involve Dad in baby's care.* Encourage him to rock, diaper, and bathe the baby. Taking an active role will help him feel closer to his child and give you a welcome break!

☞ *Pamper yourself.* With so much energy devoted to your new baby, it's important to take some time out for yourself. Take a long relaxing bath, watch your favorite movie or read a book.

☞ *Get out of the house with Dad.* After the first two weeks, you'll be ready to recharge your batteries and go out to a restaurant, to a movie, or just take a walk together. Let a relative or babysitter watch the baby so that you can enjoy each other's company.

☞ *Keep communication open.* Talk honestly with your partner about your fears, feelings and needs, and encourage him to express his own feelings. Adjusting to new parenthood, with all of its stressful demands in the early weeks, will be easier if you take the time to really listen to each other. That way you can each make the adjustments necessary to better meet your own needs as well as those of your baby.

## Getting Back To Normal

It seemed like pregnancy would last forever...but it didn't! Now it may seem that your old shape will never return...but that takes time too! With patience, sensible eating and exercise, your body will get back to normal – or something close to the way it was before you had the baby.

- Continue prenatal vitamins for a few months, or as long as you breastfeed, then switch to an over-the-counter multi-vitamin supplement.
- Birth control is necessary to prevent another pregnancy right away. Breastfeeding may delay menstrual bleeding, but you can become pregnant within a few weeks of delivery unless you use birth control methods. Check with your doctor for the method that works best for you.
- Weight loss? Most women want to lose that "baby fat" right away. Remember that your weight gain during pregnancy was composed of more than just the baby. It will take several months for your weight to return to normal, and your pre-pregnant shape to appear. Eating sensibly, avoiding strict diets, and resuming moderate exercise during the first few months is the safest and healthiest way to get back into shape.
- Don't forget your regular monthly breast self-exam! When you visit your doctor for your postpartum visit, your annual pap smear will be scheduled. Regular self-examination and medical check-ups are important for all women, even when not pregnant! ☞

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## *Leafy Greens Can Keep You In The Pink*

More than 50% of breastfeeding mothers are returning to work outside the home and continuing to breastfeed. Whether you return to work when the baby is 6 weeks old or several months later, a few changes to your routine can make the transition back to work easier. Begin planning your own strategy a few weeks before your first day at work and be prepared to make further adjustments to your plan. You and your baby can enjoy the benefits of continued breastfeeding when you return to work.

- Get breastfeeding off to a good start by breastfeeding exclusively for 4 - 6 weeks.
- Start pumping 2 - 3 weeks before you return to work.
- Use a hospital grade double pump, which will allow a mother to pump both breasts at the same time in about 10 - 15 minutes. Hospital grade double pumps can be rented from Methodist or by contacting the lactation educator at the hospital where you delivered.
- Store breast milk in hard plastic containers in 2 -4 ounce quantities. It should be refrigerated or frozen immediately after pumping. Breast milk can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 8 days or up to 3 -4 months in a self contained freezer (even longer in a deep freezer.) Label and date each container.
- If you will be at work for 8 hours or more, try to pump at least 3 times during the day.
- Back to work breastfeeding class offered. 🌸

## *Baby's Sleep Needs*

"I'm getting no sleep!" is a common complaint of new parents. Newborns can sleep from 12 to 21 hours in a 24-hour period, but these sleep episodes vary from 20 minutes to one "long" 4 to 5 hour stretch. Unfortunately, many babies seem to prefer this long sleep period during the day, getting their days and nights mixed up.

To encourage your baby to sleep longer at night, wake him for feedings every 2 to 3 hours during the day. Keep him in the midst of household noise and activity during the daytime and early evening hours. He will learn to sleep through these normal daytime noise levels. At night when he awakens, keep the lights dim, with a minimum of activity. This way he learns that nighttime is not a fun time to be awake. It's just a time for feeding, a diaper change, and then back to sleep! 🌸



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