

# Postnatal Survival Guide

When you're preggers, most ladies don't give much thought to the days and weeks beyond birth. They arrive home from hospital, get baby out of the car seat and think "Now what?". We thought a post partum survival guide might help to get you through those first few weeks and help you adjust to being 'one more'.



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## Brilliant Bonding

After months of preparation, disturbed sleep and anticipation your little one has finally arrived. Obviously you aren't the only ones excited that there is a new addition to your family, grandparents, aunts & uncles, and friends will all be very keen to visit as soon as possible. It is important to remember however that after the rigours of labour and birth you will need time to recover. Also, those first few days at home can be amazingly special and are a critical time for you and your partner to bond with your new baby. It's an even more important time if you already have other children, they will need to know that they are still just as important to you and this is a perfect time to include them as much as possible with the care of the new baby and give them a chance to bond too without lots of visitors giving baby all the attention. Why not allow only closest relatives to visit for no more than an hour the day after you get home and then have at least 48 hours alone as a family unit. There will be lots of time after that for everyone to meet baby.

## Breastfeeding

There are a lot of people who say that breastfeeding is one of the most natural things in the world and in this day and age it is heavily promoted by all medical staff. There's no denying that it does give your baby the best possible start in life. If you're very lucky you will find it easy and enjoyable. Many Mums however for a huge variety of reasons struggle with feeding. Do not struggle along alone. There is masses of help out there (look under 'help and support' in the Pink Pages). You have not failed, and you most certainly are not alone. The sooner you get help the sooner you can start really enjoying this most amazing opportunity to bond with your little one.

## Food

Both you and your partner are going to be pretty tired and cooking is liable to be the last thing on your mind, especially if you've got other little ones. If you are super organised then do a few batches of cooking in the run up to 'B-day', shepherd's pie, chicken casserole, lasagne, chilli even can easily be prepared and put into one person portions in small foil trays with lids. Only prepare them to the stage before they would normally go in the oven, then put the lids on and put in the freezer. Then, once baby has arrived, each day just get something out to defrost and pop it in the oven for dinner. If this all seems like too much work, keep things simple and stock up on nice pasta sauces, and a few ready meals. You'll probably also get lots of offers of help, why not suggest that some of these well meaning loved ones cook up something yummy for you – they could do a batch cook for you and put them in trays to bring over for you to cook later! Just remember to eat as well as you can and get stuck in to those veggies – especially if you're breastfeeding.

## Everything's a Phase

Try to remember – however tough things might be, or however tired you might feel – everything is a phase and will pass!! Enjoy this special time and let your natural instincts lead the way. No-one knows how to care for your baby better than you do – no matter how experienced they are!

## Don't be surprised by the Baby Blues

Over 60% of woman experience the 'baby blues', but it's a lot easier to deal with if you're expecting it and can recognise the symptoms! The Baby Blues is a period of mild depression that typically happens around 3-5 days after delivery. You may feel very emotional and upset for no particular reason. You might even feel very anxious and tense. Minor problems may worry you more than they otherwise would. If you feel like crying – then cry. Talk to your partner, friends, other Mums about how you feel and rest as much as you can. The blues will pass fairly quickly, it may last for a few hours or for a few days, and then it should disappear. If you do find that these feelings continue or get worse, please talk to your Midwife, Health Visitors or GP as it might be you are beginning to suffer from post natal depression and might need a little extra help to overcome it.

## Ignore the Housework

However house proud you might have been before now, babies inevitably change things, and now is not the time to worry about the dusting! Let the housework slide for a few weeks. Trust me, no visitors will notice. If you are really bothered by it, perhaps employ a cleaner for a few weeks to tide you over or ask a friend or relative to help out.

## Visitors

Spread visitors out. Baby is not going anywhere and there will be lots of opportunities for all your family and friends to get to know them. Tiring yourself out with masses of visitors in the first few weeks will have you resenting people rather than enjoying their company and letting them help out. Keep visits short to begin with. When you organise the visit or as people arrive, let visitors know that you are still feeling pretty tired but it's lovely to see them for a quick visit. If visitors are overstaying their welcome, don't feel bad about excusing yourself for a nap or a bath. Also, don't hesitate to get visitors to help out a little while they're there – ask them to make some tea or put some washing on if that helps. Now is not the time for playing hostess with the mostess – let yourself be pampered.

## Recovering

As well as being sleep deprived you will have been through the wringer both physically and emotionally during your labour and if you've had a caesarean you will have also endured major surgery! At best you may well be feeling very achy and a bit sore 'down below'. Take good care of yourself. If you had the flu you'd be in bed, resting loads and taking it easy. Of course it's a bit more complicated when you've got a baby there but you must rest as much as possible, eat as well as you can and give yourself a chance to recover. You can start your career as Super Mum in a couple of weeks time. Tip from the top – lavender oil in your bath or on your maternity pads can be very relieving and also aids healing.

