



POSTPARTUM CARE FOR MOTHERS

THE FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER BIRTH

What is happening to our body in the first days after having a baby and how to support it in the best way.

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FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER THE BABY IS BORN

It is a very challenging concept to describe how a new mum feels the first few days after her baby is born.

I am not sure we can (in truth, adequately describe it to an expecting mum to truly prepare her for this.

I mean we speak about rest, and exhaustion, hormones plummeting, breastfeeding and nutrition. But in truth are there any words that can really describe the extreme and overwhelming feelings after our baby is born?

I don't mean the full 42 weeks, or the first months.. I mean the first day to 2 weeks.

Maybe this is why there is very little description available for mums to actually prepare for *this* time after birth?

When a new baby is born, the Mother is also born into a new sense of identity and being. She is also newborn Mother.

- a Dr Gauri

Either way – it is little spoken about, and tends to be very surprising for new moms.

I think the best way to get more information and preparation is to share and talk about it.

To say things as they are and to give lots of space for women to simply become into their new Mother bodies and Being.

I find giving a mum the space to find herself with support available for anything allows the Mum to come

POSTPARTUM CHANGES



into herself and find her own natural rhythm and momentum, figuring out her newborn baby, while healing her body and resting. With no other tasks, or concerns during this time. No distractions nor pressures.

This is challenging in itself. Let's explain exactly what to expect for those first few days of healing for the different parts of our body.

As you know, there is a huge transition from pregnancy to postpartum that happens within our body affecting many different systems. These include our digestive, endocrine (hormone), cardiovascular, muscular and skeletal system as well as our reproductive system and genitals.

We don't necessarily feel the changes in our blood pressure, as the fluid volumes adjust, or the intestines finding a new space and way of lying but we may experience it as other symptoms.

This is most often exhaustion or weakness, as our body comes back into a sudden balance. By not exerting much activity or energy on our body during this time (by resting in bed only) – we are allowing our body to come into balance as it needs to with a focus and directed energy.

What we don't realise is how our mind will feel in a whole new unknown territory. So this supports again, allowing Mum to rest and be cared for in a loving, supportive manner allows her to be least stressed and her mind to slowly re-orientate to the new baby, her body and the dynamics.



YONI - FIRST FEW DAYS

The yoni recovers well and beautifully after birth, especially when we are rested and using daily sitz baths. However in the first few days until the second week it can still feel very tender, bruised, and painful as it heals.

Stitches tend to make the area more tender for longer and sometimes the stitches can be a little irritating on the skin too. Any open cuts or grazes will burn when coming in contact with urine, or water. Using a jug with warm water and pouring over the raw area while urinating can soothe that immensely.

The whole bum and vagina area feel very bruised for a few days after birth. Sitting up may be painful and it takes time to be able to sit comfortably. You will want to sit without pressure on your vagina, perineum and bum area. Rolling a towel or using a doughnut to sit on can be helpful.

How long does it last?

The yoni heals fairly quickly. The first 2 days it still feels very tender however after the 3rd day the healing is more swift and the discomfort starts to improve more rapidly.

Stitches may take a few days longer or have a few areas where there is discomfort relating to the position of the stitches.

YONI HEALING – FIRST FEW DAYS



Episiotomies can create longer and more difficult healing as they are often stitched quite tightly. It helps to adjust ones expectations to take a little more time and attention to ease into it.

The bum feels bruised as there was a lot of pressure repeatedly from the baby's head. And with the pressure of the muscles pushing.

Using steams, sitz baths, Arnica 6C, sitting on something soft with a hole in the middle, rest and keeping stool soft with fibre, fluids and easily digestible foods will all support healing most comfortably.

The bum bruised feeling lasts 1- 14 days but improves rapidly after day 3.

If the pain is extreme taking a voltarin suppository keeps the pain away for 12 – 48 hours.

The yoni heals rapidly after 3 days and then again after 1-2 weeks. Sometimes the improvement is faster and then slows down again. The yoni responds very well to rest and lying in bed with legs together.

The tenderness is related to the stretching and swelling that occurs during vaginal birth and then to any further tears (often in the vagina floor) and smaller tears or grazes in the walls of the vagina and then the stitches themselves.

The swelling goes down fast after 2-3 days. The grazes, tears and stitches take a little longer to heal.

YONI HEALING

FIRST FEW DAYS

01. **Sitz baths** are very useful to keep infection away and to keep area clean and allow skin to heal together. It also assists with the pain.
02. A **perineal spritzer** containing distilled water, essential oils, witchhazel and herbal tinctures can be used after each urination or after bathing. This soothes the area further, keeping it clean to support healing.
03. **Nori** can be wet and placed over the yoni like a plaster to maintain sterile, healing.
04. **Icicle pads** (iced herbal pads) can also be soothing for the yoni if there is great pain or discomfort.



AFTER THE FIRST FEW DAYS

After bleeding has slowed down, yoni steams are very beneficial to be used daily or every second day for about 10 minutes to create an healing and sterile environment.

Once the raw areas are more healed, coconut oil, or Yoni Balm can be used to soothe and support the healing tissues.

Typical sensations and experiences in the first 1-3 days include:

- heaviness
- pressure on vagina and bum
- bruised feeling
- burning during urination
- some bleeding from vagina
- anxiety to pass stool for the first time
- swollen
- disconnected from your normal anatomy
- increased feelings of pressure on standing, sitting or straining



WOMB - FIRST FEW DAYS

The womb involutes and loses half its weight in the first week and then slowly over the next 5 weeks. During this time you notice very heavy bleeding (like a heavy period) for first 1-2 days and then it's like a normal period slowing down to light and intermittent. Bleeding can increase again after a week or 2 and with any increase in activity or exertion.

The womb feels hard in the belly and gradually gets smaller to its normal size over 6 weeks.

You may feel period like cramps (or more intense cramps with a second or more pregnancy). These can be very painful and intensified when baby latches and sucks and lasts for the first 2-3 days. Sometimes a voltarin suppository or tablet is helpful to ease the intensity.

Naturally cramps will be there, and perhaps a surge of blood when the uterus contracts in response to the hormones during breastfeeding. This is helping the uterus heal too.

It is helpful to ensure adequate fluid intake, nutrition, lying down rest, no lifting things up or carrying things (as this adds strain to the healing uterus), belly massage (fundal massage) and breastfeeding are all things that can help the uterus healing.

There are some lovely herbs to use to support this process by drinking tea, massage oils, herbal steams and baths.



If there is an increase in cramps, heavy non-stop bleeding or a foul smell these are red flags to consult with your midwife.

Maintaining rest and the basics for optimal healing supports restoration and adequate healing of the womb.

FIRST FEW DAYS

PELVIC FLOOR

As the pelvic floor has stretched and worked hard during the entire pregnancy and during the birth it is important to remember that the healing is gradual and over many weeks.

Therefore rest, little activity or strain and nourishing warm foods are helpful to heal and maintain optimal recovery.

At first your muscles and support may feel quite weak, loose or heavy. You may feel like there is pressure below and you can't quite hold everything as normal. You may notice some urine escaping with a cough or a sneeze. You may also notice a gap in your belly muscles (as a gap or weak place vertically in line above your umbilicus).

In the first few days to weeks everything is still coming back to alignment and strength. It feels like this and is a sensation that may not be familiar.

A belly binding wrap or belly binder is helpful to support our abdominal muscles and create a sense of support.



BREASTS IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS



BREASTS - FIRST FEW DAYS

At first although baby is latching and sucking there seems to be no milk. If you express correctly you can squeeze out a little see through oily like droplet. This is called colostrum. A little drop is normal and perfect and exactly what happens for the first 2 -3 days after birth.

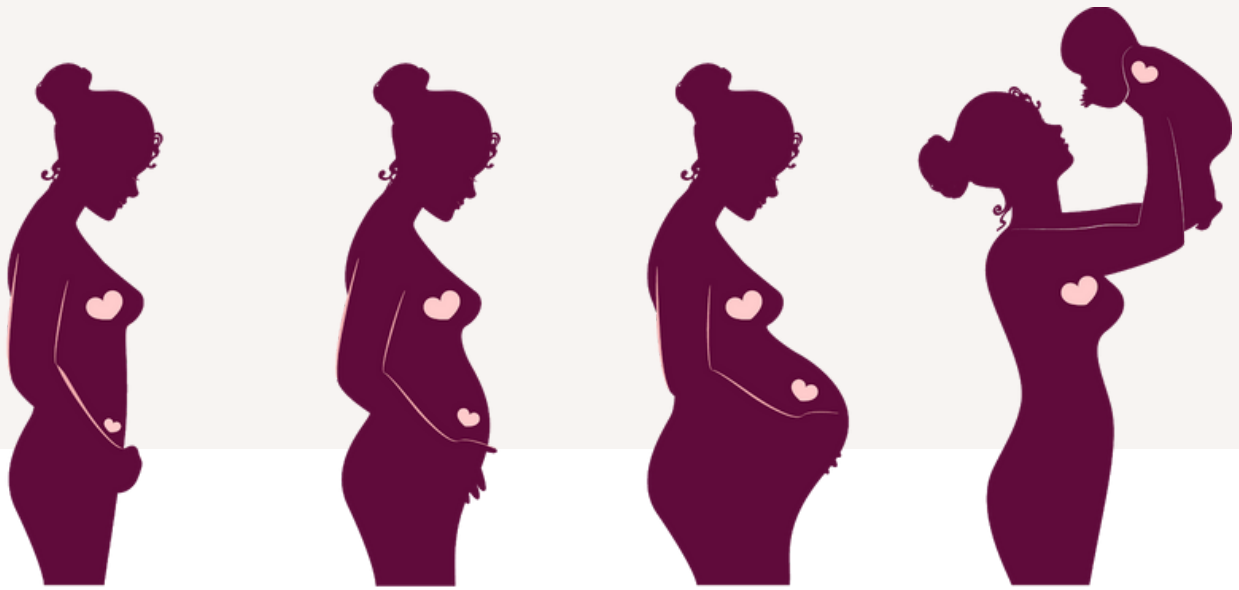
There is a misunderstanding that causes a lot of pressure, stress and disbelief in a mums' capacity to breastfeed. Most mums seem to believe that milk is there straight away. It takes a few days for the hormones to readjust and for the baby to maintain latching correctly and sucking to bring in the milk.

The milk goes from see-through to yellow slowly over the 2-3 days and then becomes milky.

It seems like the baby is not drinking anything but that is happening automatically. If the latch is correct and good sucking movements are happening every 2-3 hours then baby is drinking enough. He may cry for more and then it is best to give breast whenever he is crying or fussing before he escalates to being more upset and needing to calm down first to latch.

Some babies are too sleepy at first and it is necessary and important to wake them to drink frequently. Once they get too sleepy and miss feeds, their sugar goes down and they get more sleepy and then miss more feeds. This becomes difficult for breastmilk to come in and to be secreted to avoid lumps and swelling.

BREASTS - FIRST FEW DAYS



After the first day or 2 the breasts fill up more and one can feel they are heavier and full. The best way to care for new breastfeeding breasts is to massage gently with warm compresses or under a warm shower. If swollen you can try and express some milk out by a correct hand express, easier in the shower. Or you can get a partner or older child to suck out some milk.

Cold compresses are also helpful for short times to decrease any pain.

Massage helps get the lumps and swellings out. And best is for baby to drink and empty the breasts too.

One often needs a lot of support around initiating and maintaining

breastfeeding so preparing by having your social media groups that give sound advice, friends who have breastfed and a good support team or lactation consultant is a good idea. There are different ways breastfeeding can be challenging and it is hard to know which one if any may present.

Either way – it takes a lot of mental determination and support and tips to help get started on the breastfeeding journey.

It is not a good idea to think that your gynae, paediatrician, gp or nurse will support you in the best way. In my experience they do the opposite and their advice can be quite harmful, minimising and make you feel worse.

They also tend to suggest things that are not helpful but can create further problems. For example – topping up with formula, or giving water or glycerine to the baby.

The best way to create the most optimal environment for breastfeeding is as mentioned - rest next to baby within 50cm so she can smell, touch, hear you. Even better is skin to skin with baby – no clothes in between, no bra, no t shirt, no baby vest (only a nappy if anything) and breastfeeding every 2 hours.

My best resources are La Leche League who have trained volunteers who are available online, and local, and kellymom.com – a website that has good advice.

There are many youtube tutorials available on how to latch correctly and different ways to position baby that can help a lot whenever you need.



BREASTS

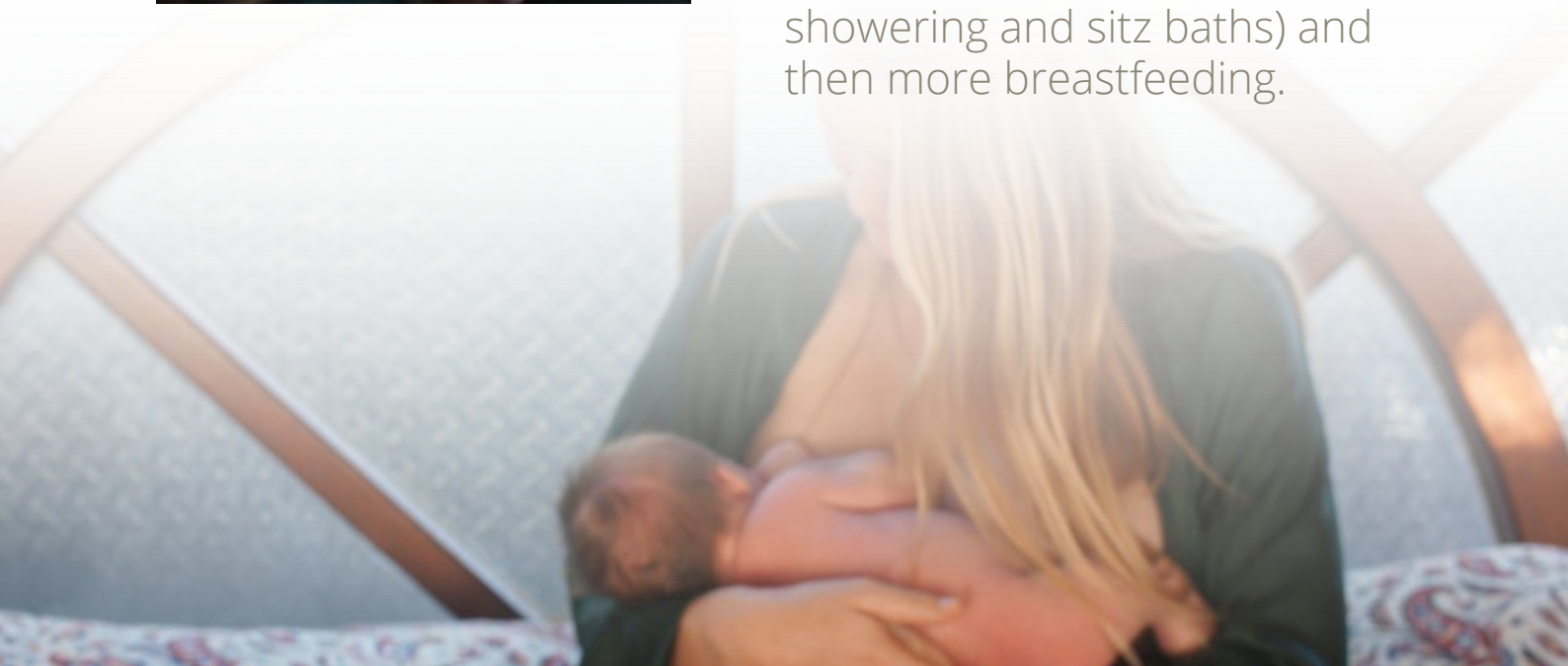
FIRST FEW DAYS

Breastfeeding is best when you are most comfortable. Having many pillows behind you so you can be quite upright helps the angle for baby to latch. Lying a little back will make it harder for baby to keep nipple in mouth. Keep pillows to support your sides too and perhaps under your baby as well. (So you are not holding baby and carrying the weight, but rather the pillow is supporting your arms and baby.)



Breastfeeding becomes your most demanding activity during the first few days postpartum. You may need to be trying to latch several times or many minutes before baby latches. This takes a sense of calmness, perseverance and a lot of gentle self talk.

You will basically only be breastfeeding for the first few weeks (and a little bit of showering and sitz baths) and then more breastfeeding.



ENERGY AND CARDIO-VASCULAR SYSTEM

The first few days are when your body is acclimatising physically to a whole new range of internal fluid parameters, some blood loss during birth, and many physical changes.

This means you may feel weaker than normal, you may feel dizzy if you get up, you may feel unbalanced and vulnerable.

It is best to not have to get up much during this time and have everything you need brought to you. When you get up, do it slowly. Sit up slowly. Then pause. Stand up slowly and pause. Walk slowly with assistance or hand on the wall if you need to feel supported. You can ask for help if you need to go to the bathroom or shower. Ask someone to help you when you need it or are feeling dizzy. No need to be super independent now!

Ensure you are having a lot of fluid intake too. (Not sodas or juices but warm water and teas).

With rest and warming nutrition you will start to feel better slowly over the next few days and then rapidly after day 2, normally.

If you have lost more blood than usual or had a caesarian the recovery may be longer.

Your midwife will be measuring your blood pressure and pulse after the birth to make sure they are also normalising.



DIGESTION IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS

The changes to digestion during pregnancy take some time to readjust to the space and affects from the different hormones. It is wise to be careful and conscious about eating foods that are beneficial and appropriate during your first few days postpartum.

Foods that are easy to digest and warming. Use your diet and fluid intake to support ease of flow of stool so you do not experience constipation and avoid any straining or extra pressure.

Your food and diet postpartum forms an essential part of postpartum healing for your whole body and mind as well as supporting your digestive systems to come back into a new balance as well as high energy demands during breastfeeding and recovery.

You want good quality nutrition and you want a lot – close by! So you can reach snacks with ease.



MEALS - FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER BIRTH

Take time to prepare for your postpartum meals by sharing recipes with friends, arranging meals to be delivered and ensuring the ingredients are in your pantry before you give birth.

Look at the available resources and courses (Creating your Postpartum Support Team) to help you plan and be prepared.

The mind can be your best friend or
your worst enemy.

- Bhagavad Gita



OUR MIND - FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER BIRTH

I would like to take some time to attempt to explain the feeling of fragility, fuzziness, and overwhelm we may feel after birthing a baby.

Whether we have had a caesarian or a vaginal birth – there is a depth of new emotions that occur in the first few days.

We can expect to feel quite disorientated. One reason is that we have gone from an extreme physical state to another very quickly and it takes the flow of time to allow ones body to physically as well as mentally orientate to that.

The second reason is that it is an emotional time. Birthing a baby and becoming a mother opens our hearts in ways that we may not be used to - every time (not only for our first birth).

We feel an overwhelm with the depths of love for this new little being as well as a sense of overwhelm at the thought of being so responsible and depended on.

In addition to this our hormones are coming into a new balance very fast and that can make us feel very teary, even sad and very fragile emotionally.

FIRST FEW DAYS

THE MIND

This is all normal and rather than bypassing, suppressing, overriding or numbing it – it is beneficial to

- be prepared for it by knowing about it
- having like-minded support groups and new mum friends
- preparing for a postpartum of rest, nourishment and healing
- understand the nature of the mind and how to care for our minds (for example by reading the Postpartum Anxiety Toolkit with tips on optimal nutrition, supplements and mind practices as well as explanation on the journey of our mind postpartum).

The mind is also adjusting to a new identity as a mother. We need to practice patience and gentleness with ourselves as we mother ourselves as newborn mothers too.



FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER BIRTH

RESOURCES



Creating your Postpartum Support Team



Postpartum Anxiety Toolkit



Breastfeeding support



Limiting Beliefs about Postpartum



Gauri's Birth Network



Local like-minded Mama groups



Powerful Postpartum book

AVAILABLE ON
WWW.DRGAURILOWE.COM

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WISHING YOU A BLESSED AND SUPPORTED POSTPARTUM



Please connect with me to access a
supportive holistic group of Mamas and
for any further support or postpartum
challenges.

We are recreating the Sacred Village.