



THE POSTPARTUM PLANNING PLAYBOOK

*A gentle guide to preparing for healing, nourishment
and support after birth*

by Tin Episcopo

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Permission requests may be sent to:
afterbirthwellnessph@gmail.com

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Why This Playbook Matters

Most mothers spend months preparing for birth.
But very few prepare for what comes after.

The exhaustion. The emotions. The constant demands of a newborn.
This is where many mothers quietly begin to struggle.

Not because they're doing something wrong,
but because no one prepared them for this part.

Postpartum is not just about survival.
It's about being cared for as you heal,
as you adjust,
as you become someone new.

When a mother is cared for, nourished, and given space to rest, everything
begins to shift.

She feels more like herself again. And her whole family feels it too.

This playbook offers a different kind of preparation.
Not one built on pressure or perfection,
but one rooted in support, nourishment, and rest.

So when the early days come,
you're not just getting through them.
You're held within them. 🌿



Bodywork & Comfort

It's not that nobody mentions it. We do hear about bleeding, stitches, scars, and soreness. But hearing about it is very different from living it.

In the first days and weeks after birth, your body can feel raw and unfamiliar. Movements are slower. Sitting down takes planning. Standing up takes effort.

Looking in the mirror can feel strange, like you are meeting your body again for the first time. I remember glancing at my belly days after giving birth and thinking it resembled a sea cockroach. It was both sad and a little funny.

Postpartum has a way of humbling us like that.

And while every mother's recovery looks a little different, one thing is universal: after birth, your body has a lot of healing to do.

The Physical Side of Postpartum

Even if you believe you had the “perfect” birth, there is always some level of discomfort afterward. The intensity varies from person to person, but birth is a massive physical event. Your body has done extraordinary work, and the recovery period reflects that.

Here’s what many mothers quietly go through and the simple ways to support recovery.

<i>What’s going on</i>	<i>What you can do</i>
<p>Bleeding (Lochia) Can last for weeks, shifting from bright red to brown or pink.</p>	<p>Use pads instead of tampons Rinse gently with a peri bottle Rest if bleeding increases</p>
<p>Uterine Contractions (Afterpains) Crampy reminders that your uterus is shrinking, often stronger during breastfeeding.</p>	<p>Use a warm compress on the lower abdomen Practice slow, steady breathing Rest when cramps intensify</p>
<p>Perineal Tears or Episiotomy Soreness, stitches, and that sting when peeing.</p>	<p>Rinse with a peri bottle after bathroom trips Try warm sitz baths for comfort Sit on cushions or lie on your side</p>
<p>C-Section Incision & Scar Tenderness deep in the abdomen. Even sneezing or laughing can feel risky.</p>	<p>Hold a pillow against the incision when coughing or laughing Move slowly and avoid sudden twisting</p>
<p>Breast Changes Engorgement, cracked nipples, clogged ducts.</p>	<p>Use warm compress before feeds Apply cool packs after feeds Use nipple balm or lanolin for soreness</p>
<p>Overall Body Aches Shoulders, neck, and back often ache from feeding, carrying, and lack of sleep.</p>	<p>Change feeding positions often Use pillows to support arms and back Accept any shoulder rub someone offers</p>

Resting During the Sacred Window

If people truly paused to imagine everything happening inside your body after birth, no one would dare ask why you're "still" in bed.

Postpartum recovery is full-time, invisible labor. It's your body rebuilding itself layer by layer.

Tissues are repairing. Hormones recalibrating. Organs are moving back into place. Milk making and flowing. The very systems that grew life are now learning how to sustain you again (and another human too).

And this is exactly why rest isn't a luxury. It's the body's most intelligent tool for repair.



The first 42 days after birth set the stage for her next 42 years.

– Ysha Oakes, Ayurvedic Doula
& Postpartum Educator

Across many cultures, the early weeks after birth are treated as a protected period of recovery. It has many names: *The Sacred Window, The Golden Month, La Cuarentena, The First Forty, The Lying-In Period, or Confinement.*

Different cultures. Same idea.
The mother rests while her body heals.

It is a time of warmth, nourishment, and quiet. The body needs time, space, and stillness to complete its own healing work, and the mother will reap the benefits in the next decades.

From Resting to Comfort

Rest gives your body the space to rebuild. But as the days pass, new sensations appear. Tight shoulders, a sore back. That ache from feeding, carrying, and trying to do one more thing before sitting down.

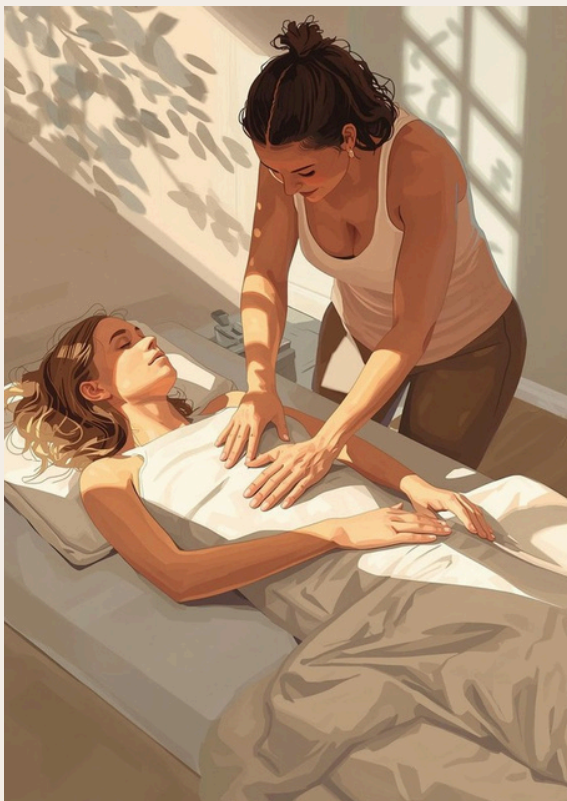
Your body, busy keeping a tiny human alive (and maybe others too), starts asking for relief.

Comfort becomes the next layer of recovery. This is where rest meets gentle action. Warmth, touch, and small movements help muscles release tension and improve circulation.

Comfort also helps the nervous system settle. It supports your sense of connection as strength slowly returns.

You might try:

- A light shoulder rub from your partner (skill optional)
- A warm compress or self-massage while the baby naps
- A postnatal massage if available



Postnatal Massage

Massage has long been part of postpartum care in many cultures. In India, the **Abhyanga** tradition uses warm oil and slow, rhythmic strokes to restore circulation and balance.

A gentle postnatal massage may:

- relieve muscle soreness from birth and feeding
- support lymphatic circulation
- provide warmth, grounding, and deep relaxation

Avoid massage if you have open wounds, fever, or any signs of infection. Wait until your body feels ready.

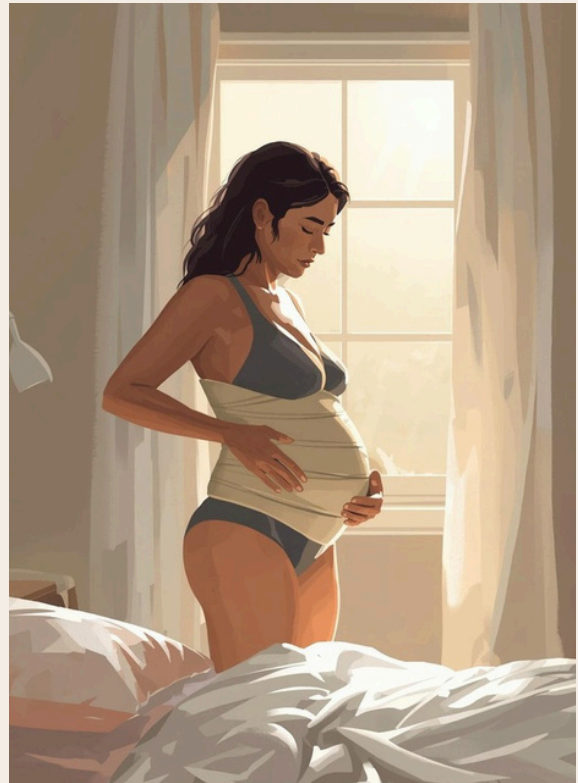
Belly Binding & Support

Found in many postpartum traditions, belly binding isn't about "getting your body back." It's about gentle stability while your core and hips recover from pregnancy and birth.

A soft wrap or binder can:

- support posture and ease lower-back strain
- keep warmth around the abdomen
- create a feeling of stability and containment

Wrap lightly. It should feel supportive, not restrictive. Skip it if you feel pain, fever, or discomfort.



Traditional Practices

Across cultures, postpartum has long been treated as a protected healing period. A time to stay warm, eat nourishing foods, and receive care while the body gently returns to balance.

While practices vary, many share the same principles:

- **Warmth.** Warm baths, herbal soaks, warm foods, and heated compresses to support circulation.
- **Containment & Support.** Belly wrapping or binding for gentle support, and a sense of physical holding.
- **Rest & Ritual.** Reduced activity, being cared for by others, and simple rituals that mark the transition into motherhood.

These practices are meant to support you, not restrict you. You can take what feels helpful, leave what doesn't, and adapt everything to your body, your beliefs, and your family life.

Sleep: Rest That Heals

Whoever came up with the phrase “sleeping like a baby” clearly never cared for one. The lack of sleep in postpartum is often expected, but rarely understood. It comes in short, broken stretches and can feel heavier than most imagine. But it still does essential work for your mind and body.

When you’re not getting enough rest, especially when you’re woken from deep, restorative sleep, it affects everything. Your memory, your patience, your body, and even your relationships.

Why Sleep Matters So Much

During deep sleep, your brain performs essential maintenance. It clears out waste, repairs damaged cells, and helps regulate your nervous system. This is also when your body releases growth hormones that support tissue repair, immune function, and help stabilize mood.

Without enough of this deep, consolidated rest, your healing slows and small stresses feel magnified.

Lack of sleep can lead to:

- Foggy memory and slower reaction times
- Irritability and emotional reactivity
- Strong sugar cravings
- Weakened immune system
- Lower confidence and relationship satisfaction

Sleep deprivation isn’t just making you tired. It’s a *physiological stressor* that reshapes how your brain and body function.

In postpartum, the nervous system stays on high alert to protect your baby, which makes deep rest harder to reach.

Supporting a mother’s ability to sleep helps the body shift back into repair mode. It is one of the most important parts of postpartum care.

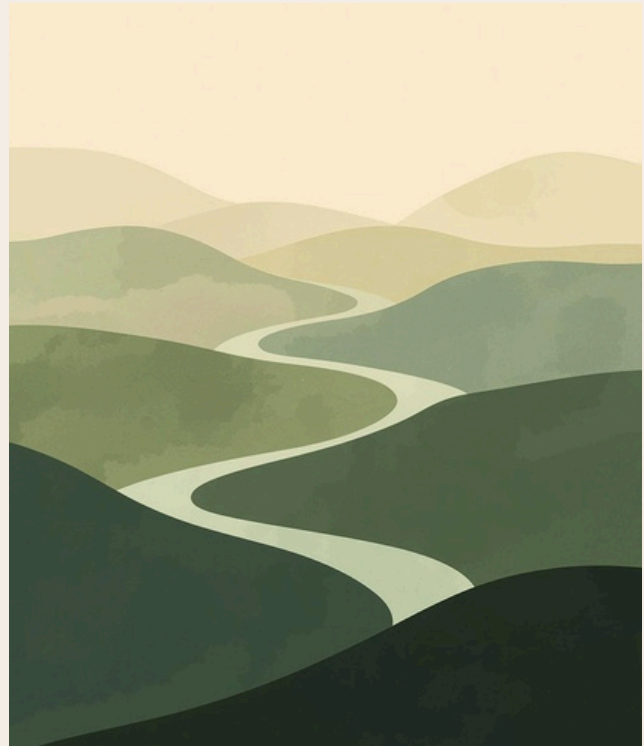


The Golden Thread

Sleep connects every part of postpartum recovery. It affects healing, mood, energy, and your ability to stay present with your baby.

If this is your first baby, you may have more flexibility to sleep when your baby rests. Take advantage of it when you can.

If you have older children, your attention is more divided, and rest may look different. Even short naps or quiet breaks can still help restore your energy.



Try These Strategies:

- Nap whenever possible, even short ones
- Trade shifts with your partner or support person
- Keep baby nearby to reduce anxiety and nighttime disruption
- Lower the bar on everything that can wait, like laundry, dishes, and non-urgent messages
- Ask for occasional night or early-morning help so you can get a longer stretch of sleep



A Collective Effort

We often tell mothers to “sleep when the baby sleeps,” yet we forget that mothers need *help* to make that possible.

Sleep is a collective effort. When families protect a mother’s rest, they protect her recovery, her mental health, and her capacity to care for her baby.



Support Systems: The Modern Village

We often say “it takes a village to raise a child,” but it also takes a village to hold a mother.

Across cultures, postpartum care was once built in. Mothers after birth were fed, encouraged to rest, and supported so they could recover and bond with their babies. That kind of care is less visible today.

Modern life has changed how support shows up. Families live farther apart, work resumes quickly, and help often requires planning instead of assumption.

Today, the village often has to be built with intention.

Most mothers don’t struggle because they’re weak. They struggle because they’re unsupported.

Postpartum support grows one clear request, one shared meal, and one honest conversation at a time. For many mothers, it begins with the person closest to them, their partner, and expands outward from there.

Fathers & Partners in Postpartum Recovery

Every birth transforms more than one person. While mothers heal and adjust, fathers experience their own quiet version of change, often without the language or support to describe it.

Getting on the same page before baby arrives helps protect recovery later. You may not carry the baby, but you carry responsibility, protection, and presence. Your role isn't to fix things. It's to stand steady beside her.

Refilling her water. Cooking a meal. Taking over chores. Holding the baby so she can rest. These acts are love in action.



Understanding Her Experience

After birth, your partner's body and brain are in recovery and transformation. Her hormones shift dramatically, her sleep is fragmented, and her emotions may swing between joy and tears. None of it is personal. It's biology.

Understanding this helps you respond with patience instead of confusion.

Many of these supports work best when they're discussed and agreed on ahead of time. Here's what helps most:

- **Protect her rest.** Handle meals, chores, and visitors. Let her nap without guilt.
- **Check in, not out.** Ask, "How are you feeling today?" and truly listen.
- **Feed her first.** Bring snacks or water while she feeds the baby.
- **See her, not just the baby.** Notice her strength, not just her role as a mother.
- **Learn the signs of PMADs.** If she seems persistently anxious or down, encourage help early.



Fatherhood changes you in ways you may not expect. It's normal to feel unsure, tired, or a little out of sync. You and your partner are both learning new rhythms.

Talk about it with her, a friend, or another dad. Fathers are adjusting too, even if it's often less visible.

Did You Know?

Fathers experience their own transition into parenthood called **patrescence**.

Hands-on dads show brain growth in empathy and problem-solving areas. Hormones like oxytocin, along with shifts in prolactin, support bonding and caregiving.



The early weeks are not about splitting everything evenly. They are about showing up as a team. Some days you will carry more, other days she will. What matters most is that you keep showing up, even when you're still figuring things out.

Partners are often the first line of support after birth. But recovery rarely happens with one person alone.

Rebuilding Your Village

Support often begins with your partner, but it doesn't end there.

As the days unfold, most families need additional help. Someone to bring food, take older kids out, run errands, or simply remind you that you are doing enough. This kind of support rarely appears automatically anymore. It has to be named and planned for.

You may not live in a close village anymore, but you can still build one around you. Think of your support in layers, starting with the people closest to you and expanding outward.

Your Postpartum Support Circles



When these layers of support are in place, the load of postpartum care becomes lighter and more manageable.

How Support Protects Recovery

Postpartum stress isn't about mindset, it's about load. Your body is actively recovering. When support is limited, stress rises and recovery slows.

- Stress raises cortisol.
- Elevated cortisol interferes with sleep, milk production, and tissue repair.
- Lack of support increases stress more than lack of information.

Support isn't a luxury. It creates the safety your nervous system needs to heal.

What Helps?

- Fewer decisions to make each day
- Someone else holding parts of the household
- Predictable, nourishing meals
- Emotional containment, not advice or fixing



Support systems don't remove stress entirely. They keep it from piling up while your body is healing.

Asking for Support

Support doesn't always come naturally — especially when people don't know what you need. Clear, honest requests make support easier for both sides.

If asking for help feels awkward, try simple specific statements like:

- “Could you drop by tomorrow and hold the baby while I shower?”
- “We'd love dinner that freezes well. Pasta or soup would be amazing.”
- “Could you come by next week instead? We're still adjusting right now.”
- “I don't need advice right now, just company.”

It's not demanding. It's directing your village. When you communicate your needs clearly, you give others permission to show up with purpose.

Bringing In Extra Help

Healing requires energy. Save yours for the parts that truly need you. Sometimes that means bringing in extra help and seeing it as an investment in your recovery.

- Hire a cleaner if you can. Sign up for meal delivery.
- Let a trusted relative take the older kids for a walk.
- Accept the soup, even if it's the third one this week.
- If available in your area, consider hiring postpartum support such as a doula or in-home helper.

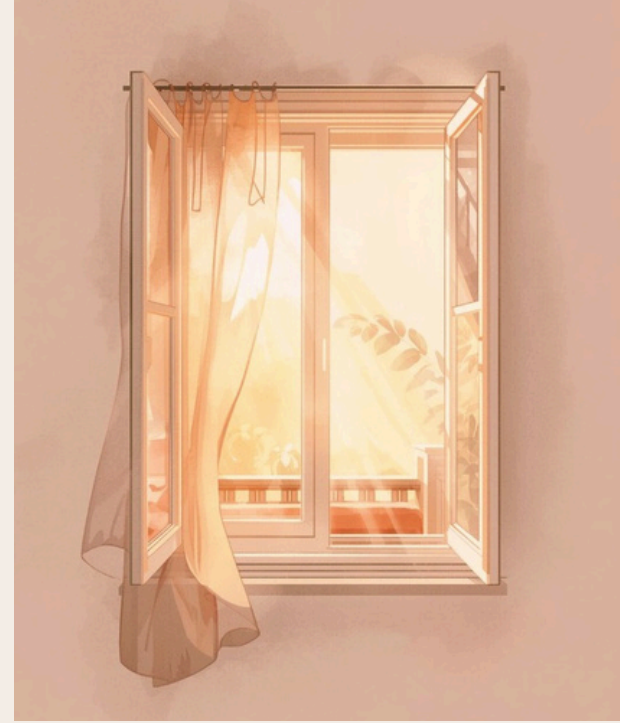
This isn't indulgence — it's strategy. Every task you delegate gives you more space to rest, recover, and have moments to yourself.



Every mother deserves to feel held, not just by her partner or family, but by a circle of care that reminds her she's not alone. Support isn't a sign of weakness; it's a form of wisdom.

When you allow others to care for you, you create the space you need to heal and settle into life with your baby.

And as your body heals, your heart and mind need tending too. Let's turn to that next: your emotional and mental wellbeing.



Emotional & Mental Wellbeing

Perhaps you've always wanted to be a parent, or maybe you trusted that things would fall into place. Many of us imagine birth as the hard part. Once labor is over, we expect the bliss to begin.

"The birth of a mother can be more intense than childbirth." — Julia Jones, postpartum educator.

It brings a new kind of season. One that holds both beauty and exhaustion, tears and tiny joys. This emotional and mental transition is real, and it deserves care and support.

In the first weeks, while you and your partner are learning to care for a baby, your mind may feel unfamiliar. You might feel sensitive, unsettled, or overwhelmed. Some emotions pass as hormones settle. Others linger longer or feel heavier.

None of this means you're doing something wrong. It means something important in your life is changing.

Identity shift

Identity shift can feel enormous for first-time mothers. Along with realizing that you're now a mom comes another realization. Your new normal may not look the way you imagined it would.

The routines, the silence, the slowness, and even the person you used to be can feel suddenly distant. All of this takes getting used to.

IBCLC Jaimie Zaki, a breastfeeding educator and mom of five, was once asked which transition is hardest: from one baby to two, or two to three?

Her answer:

"It's zero to one, because it's a shock to the system."

This shift isn't a failure to adjust quickly. It's the beginning of becoming someone new.

There's a name for this shift: *Matrescence*

Matrescence is the process of becoming a mother. It's more than adding a baby to your life. It's a shift in identity, priorities, and sense of self.

The woman you were doesn't disappear. She grows and makes room for someone new.

This transition unfolds over months and even years. Feeling unsettled or unsure doesn't mean something is wrong. It means you're in the middle of becoming.

New Responsibilities & Loss of Me Time

With new responsibilities often comes something many mothers miss quickly: uninterrupted time.

Before your baby arrived, responsibility may have felt internal and flexible. You could move freely, follow your own rhythms, and meet your needs as they arose.

After birth, responsibility becomes constant and visible. Feeding schedules, diaper bags, nap timing, the mental load of keeping a small human alive.

Things that once took an hour might now take a whole day. What you used to finish in a day might stretch into a week, or even months (Netflix shows included).

Motherhood has a way of rearranging time. You might find it harder to shower, eat while your food is still hot, or even finish a thought.

It can feel like you've lost yourself. But you haven't. Your needs have simply moved to the back seat for a while. And this isn't only about time. It's about space. The mental space to be something other than needed.



For experienced mothers:

If you've been through postpartum before, you already know what it asks of you. Each baby brings change, but nothing compares to that first initiation. The first postpartum can feel like being thrown into the deep end with no warning. Every round after that, with a little more preparation, you float a little better.

Oxytocin boosters

Motherhood can shrink your world to feeding schedules, diaper changes, and nap windows. Days blur together and before you know it, you haven't stepped outside or breathed fresh air in days.

Even so, your body and brain are doing deep work. Healing. Bonding. Learning. What mothers need most in this season are small, steady moments that refill oxytocin, the hormone of calm, connection, and love.

Self-care here doesn't need to be elaborate. It's often found in tiny, doable moments that remind your body you exist beyond the to-do list. That you're allowed to receive, not just provide.

Ideas to Boost Your Oxytocin

(Use this list as inspiration for your “Feel-Good Log.” Add your own rituals as you go.)

Go for a short walk outside	Take a long, warm bath or shower	Drink a cup of coffee or tea while it's still warm	Hug someone you love for 20 seconds	Get some morning sunlight
Send a message to someone who “gets it”	Slow breastfeeding moment without multitasking	Read or listen to something inspiring	Do light stretching or dance in your living room	Video call your bestie or mom friend

Passion is Fuel

One way to keep your spirit alive in motherhood is to stay connected to what lights you up. This might look like writing, painting, gardening, reading, or continuing work you care about.

Parenting can slowly pull you into survival mode, doing just enough to keep everyone warm and fed. Making space for what fills you, even in small ways, helps you remember yourself.

When your cup is filled, your whole family benefits. Mothers tend to show up with more patience, warmth, and presence. I know I’m a kinder mother and a happier wife when I make space to refill mine.



Boundaries

In postpartum life, your energy is your most valuable resource. Many things will ask for it: the baby, your husband, your family, the group chats, even the laundry.

Boundaries aren't about shutting people out. They're about keeping what matters most in view. Here, boundaries support your rest, your healing, and the limited energy you have each day.

You might limit visitors in the early weeks, ask friends to drop off food instead of staying long, or silence your phone for a few hours so you can rest.

Sometimes, a boundary is as simple as saying, "We're resting today."

Energy Check

Before saying "yes" to something, pause and ask:

Will this nourish me or drain me?

If it drains you, it's okay to decline or to postpone. Rest doesn't make you ungrateful. It makes you capable.

Simple Boundaries to Try

- **Visitors:** It's okay to ask people to wait a few weeks, or to visit only when you're ready. "We'll let you know when we're up for visitors." is a full sentence. The right visitors are the ones who let you rest without guilt. Or better yet, help while they're there.
- **Social Media:** You don't owe anyone baby updates, photos, or replies. But you're free to share if and when it feels good to you.
- **Help Offers:** Say "yes" to meals, cleaning, and errands. Say "no" to company that drains you. The best help lightens your load, not adds to it.
- **Partner Communication:** Be honest about what you need, even if it changes daily.
- **Self-Criticism:** The hardest boundary is often the one you set with yourself. Speak kindly to your reflection.

The Myths That Exhaust Us

Some of the heaviest pressure in motherhood doesn't come from the baby. It comes from the expectations we carry about what a "good mother" should be. These expectations often show up as quiet myths that shape how we judge ourselves. Let's name some of them and then gently let them go.



The Supermom Myth

The idea that a good mother can do everything all at once, all the time is deeply exhausting. Yes, multitasking becomes second nature in motherhood. But it doesn't mean you have to stay "on" every second. You're allowed to pause, rest, and ask for help.

The Bounce-Back Call

"Bouncing back" isn't just about your body. It's the quiet expectation to return to work, routines, or passions as if nothing changed. But everything has. You're not meant to go back; you're meant to move forward, slowly, into a rhythm that fits this new season.



The Perfect Parent Pressure

Social media might make it look like everyone else has a spotless home, a well-dressed baby, and an endless supply of patience. You don't see the chaos behind their camera. Perfection isn't the goal — presence is.

The Working vs. Staying Home Guilt Trap

Work outside the home and you're told you're missing out. Stay home, and you're told you're not doing enough. But both paths are forms of love. Both require sacrifice, heart, and constant adjustment.



When The Blues Feel Heavier

Many mothers find themselves crying in the first weeks after birth. Hormones crash, sleep disappears, and everything feels intense. This wave of emotion is often called the baby blues, and it usually passes within a couple of weeks.

But sometimes the heaviness lingers. It deepens. You might feel foggy, anxious, restless, or disconnected, like you're floating just outside yourself. You may begin to wonder why things don't feel better yet.

You're not weak, broken, or ungrateful. You're human. Your brain and body are asking for care.

Did You Know?

About 1 in 5 mothers experience a Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorder (PMAD) during pregnancy or postpartum.

This includes postpartum depression, anxiety, OCD, PTSD, or psychosis. These can show up as overwhelming thoughts, fear, or emotions. It's not your fault, and it's not something you can just "snap out of."

The good news: PMADs are treatable. With the right support, recovery is possible.

What It Can Look Like

PMADs can show up in many ways, sometimes loud and sometimes quiet:

- Persistent sadness, emptiness, or guilt
- Feeling detached from your baby or yourself
- Constant worry or racing thoughts
- Panic attacks or sudden fear
- Difficulty sleeping even when the baby sleeps
- Intrusive thoughts that scare you
- Feeling numb, hopeless, or overwhelmed
- Thoughts that your family might be better off without you

If any of these sound familiar, please know this: you are not alone, and help exists.

What Can Help



Tell someone

You don't have to carry this quietly. Talk to your partner, a friend, your midwife, or your doctor. Saying it out loud is the first step toward getting help that works.



Rest and nourishment

Your brain heals best when your body feels supported. Food, hydration, sunlight, and short naps. They are medicine too.



Gentle movement

Even five minutes of fresh air or slow stretching can help your nervous system reset.



Professional support

Therapists and doctors can assess and treat PMADs. Help at home can ease daily demands and support recovery.

Care Is Part of Motherhood Too

Some days may feel heavier than you expected. You can love your baby deeply and still have hard days.

Postpartum asks a lot of you, often all at once. If something feels off, it's a reason to get support, not blame yourself. With time and the right care, many mothers begin to feel like themselves again.



Food & Nutrition in Postpartum

While pregnant, most of us follow a list of “rules” to protect our baby’s growth and well-being. We watch sugar, avoid raw foods, and double-check every bite. Maybe it’s that sense of restriction during pregnancy that makes many people think, *“I can eat whatever I want once the baby’s out.”*

And technically, you can.
But the better question is: should you?

Postpartum healing runs on nourishment. Every repair process in your body depends on it. Food isn’t just comfort in this season. It’s vital support for recovery.

Your healing body

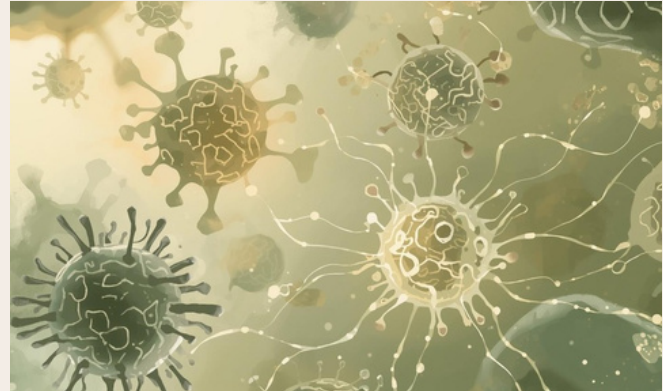
Much of postpartum healing happens beneath the surface. Your body is carrying out an extraordinary repair project quietly, around the clock.

Here's what's happening behind the scenes:

- Blood and nutrient stores are being replenished.
- Hormones are shifting.
- Tissues are repairing and organs are shifting back into place.
- Digestion slows as your body prioritizes healing.
- The brain is rewiring for caregiving.

Birth creates normal inflammation. It's part of healing. But when sleep is limited, stress is high, or the body isn't getting enough nourishment, inflammation can stay elevated longer than needed.

Nourishment helps the body calm that response so healing can move forward more smoothly.



Let's Not Forget

Healing isn't the only thing happening after birth. Your body is also making milk. It's an energy-intensive process that can burn as much as 500 extra calories a day. And it's doing all that while sleep-deprived, often underfed, and on constant alert for your baby's next need.

4 Vitals of Postpartum Nutrition

After birth, your body's energy shifts toward healing and milk production. Digestion naturally slows during this time. That's why four simple factors can make nourishment easier to absorb and use for healing.

This framework, shared by postpartum nutrition educator Maranda Bower, reflects both modern understanding and long-standing postpartum traditions across cultures. Together, these principles help your body turn food into real support for healing.

Fully cooked

Your digestive system is more sensitive right now. Warm, cooked foods are easier to break down and allow your gut to focus on healing instead of heavy processing. Think soups, stews, porridges, and broths.

Few ingredients

Keeping meals simple reduces digestive effort and supports smoother nutrient absorption. It also helps you notice which foods leave you feeling truly nourished.

Warm or hot

Warm foods support circulation, relax the body, and help digestion stay steady. Cold foods can slow digestion further during early recovery, so warmth becomes your ally.

Proteins and Fats

Protein and healthy fats are the building blocks of repair. They stabilize blood sugar, support hormone balance, and provide steady energy for healing and milk production.



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Your Weekly Nourishment Framework

A loose meal rhythm, not a strict plan, helps your body receive steady nourishment even when life with a newborn feels unpredictable. If the week doesn't go as planned, that's okay. Healing happens through consistency, not perfection.

A Simple Guiding Idea

Each meal can follow this gentle postpartum formula:

Warm + Cooked + Simple + Nourishing

Think of meals that are easy to prepare, gentle on your body, and comforting to return to each day.

Breakfasts (quick + low effort)

- Oatmeal with berries and cinnamon
- Scrambled eggs with spinach
- [Blender protein pancakes](#)
- Toast with avocado or nut butter + egg

Lunches (comfort + grounding)

- Chicken vegetable soup
- Beef stew
- Squash soup
- Fried rice with turmeric
- Honey lemon salmon

Dinners (simple + repeatable)

- Chicken coconut curry
- Homemade meatballs
- Steamed white fish
- Tomato & basil soup

Hydration & Sips

- Warm water
- Bone broth
- Herbal teas (oatstraw, nettle, red raspberry leaf)
- Coconut water

Desserts

- Warm apples with cinnamon and yogurt
- Gluten free oatmeal
cranberry cookies
- Rice pudding
- Baked custard

Filipino Favorites

- Tinolang manok
- Lugaw or Arrozcaldo + egg
- Malunggay soup
- Nilagang baka

These are examples, not expectations. Repeating meals is allowed and often supportive. In the early weeks, simpler, softer meals often feel better than heavier ones.

Food Traditions & Individual Needs

Postpartum nourishment doesn't look the same in every culture or household. Your traditions, beliefs, and personal preferences all matter.

Medical needs, religious practices, and cultural food traditions deserve respect in postpartum recovery.



If you eat plant-based

If you follow a vegetarian or vegan diet, postpartum nourishment may require extra planning to meet increased needs for protein, fats, iron, and other key nutrients.

Some families choose to adjust temporarily. Others rely on careful food pairing and supplementation. What matters most is that your body has what it needs to heal.





Meal Planning & Preparation Ahead

Prepping doesn't have to mean full freezer meals. It can be as simple as doubling dinner or chopping vegetables for tomorrow. Try these:

- Double soups, stews, or grains and freeze in single portions
- Make a "snack station" in the fridge with grab-and-go options
- Cook extra rice or quinoa for easy meals later in the week
- Label freezer meals with simple reheating instructions
- Accept help. If someone offers to cook, let them.

Snacks & One-Handed Foods

You'll eat one-handed more often than you expect. These quick bites keep your energy stable between feeds:

- Hard-boiled eggs
- Banana with nut butter
- Warm soup in a mug
- Egg muffins
- Overnight oats with chia pudding
- Cheese cubes, crackers, or roasted chickpeas
- Granola clusters
- Dark chocolate
- Greek yogurt

Postpartum hunger comes quickly. Having a snack basket nearby helps you reach for something nourishing instead of whatever is easiest in the moment.

On the nights you're exhausted, you'll be thankful you made things easier ahead of time.



Key Nutrients for Postpartum Recovery

Food is the foundation of recovery. When intake is limited or deficiencies are present, **supplementation** may help. Seek guidance from your healthcare provider, especially while breastfeeding or taking medication. Real food does the heavy lifting. Supplements can support when needed.

This isn't a complete list, but these are some of the most commonly depleted and supportive nutrients during this time.



Iron

Birth often involves blood loss. Low iron can leave you feeling dizzy, foggy, weak, or bone-tired even after rest.

- Food sources: meats, lentils, leafy greens, dates
- Tip: Pair with vitamin C to boost absorption.



Vitamin D

This “sunshine vitamin” supports bone health, immunity, mood regulation, and recovery.

- Food sources: fatty fish, eggs, fortified milk, mushrooms



Magnesium

Often overlooked, magnesium supports sleep, digestion, muscle relaxation, and nervous system regulation.

- Food sources: pumpkin seeds, almonds, leafy greens, avocados, dark chocolate



Choline

Essential for brain health for both mother and baby. It supports memory, focus, and neurological development.

- Food sources: egg yolks, chicken, beef, legumes



Omega-3s

Support brain function, hormone balance, mood stability, and may help lower the risk of postpartum mood disorders.

- Food sources: salmon, sardines, flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, and bangus

When postpartum nourishment is delayed or minimized, depletion can quietly accumulate. It doesn't always show up right away, but over time it can make motherhood feel heavier and more draining than it needs to be.

Nourishing yourself now isn't about doing everything right. It's about building a steadier foundation for the long road ahead.

Nourishment Needs Support

All this meal prepping and planning is helpful until you're too tired to even decide what to reheat. Freezer meals help, but the most effective support is still other people.

Feeding yourself well honors your recovery. But it was never meant to be a solo act.

For generations, postpartum meant shared meals, extra hands, and community presence.

Recovery becomes sustainable when you're supported by real people and simple systems. That's what keeps a mother nourished, not just in body but in spirit.

Because healing isn't just about food. It's about being fed with care, consistency, and connection.





The Early Weeks: Adjustment & Regulation

You'll find out (if you haven't already) that taking care of a newborn is far different from raising a virtual pet. It's not as easy as keeping a Tamagotchi alive.

Your baby isn't just hungry or tired. They are brand new to the world. For nine months, they lived in warmth, darkness, and a steady rhythm. Now everything is bright, loud, and unfamiliar. And you are meeting a version of yourself you haven't known before.

These early weeks are a time of adjustment. You're learning what your baby needs and what helps them settle. Some things will work once and not the next time. As you begin to notice their patterns, small pockets of calm will follow.

Even with succeeding babies, there is still a learning curve. This baby is different. And so are you. The goal isn't to get everything right. It's to create an environment where both of you feel safe, supported, and cared for.

Before Birth: Laying the Groundwork

Postpartum care begins before birth. How you nourish, move, and prepare now shapes how gently you land on the other side.



Stay connected to yourself.

Do the things that matter to you while you still can. Finish a project, revisit something you've been putting off, or enjoy the kind of time that's fully yours. Life will shift once the baby arrives, and your time will look different for a while.

Simplify and clear space.

Make room where you can. In your home, on your phone, and in your mind. Unfollow what stirs anxiety. Keep what steadies you. Choose habits and conversations that help your nervous system settle.

Learn how birth works.

A good birth class can make a big difference. Learn about labor positions, breathing, comfort measures, and how your partner can support you. You can also create a simple birth plan. Not to control the outcome, but to clarify your preferences and communicate what matters to you.

Prepare for feeding and early care.

Even a short breastfeeding class can help ease early uncertainty. Learn what's normal, how to recognize a good latch, and when to reach out for support. And as you've seen throughout this playbook, your nourishment, rest, and support system all shape how sustainable it feels in those early weeks.

Why this matters:

When you enter postpartum feeling informed and supported, you reduce shock and decision fatigue. It's not about perfect planning. It's about gentle readiness.

Right After Birth

Postpartum begins the moment your baby arrives, whether you're in a hospital, birth center, or at home. A little preparation can make those first days feel calmer and more supportive of your body after birth.

A Few Helpful Items

Here are a few items you may want to add to your birth bag for your own comfort and recovery.

- Towel
- Disposable adult diaper pants
- Socks
- Insulated water bottle with a spout
- Nourishing snacks you tolerate well (*Instant oats, soups, tea*).

Questions to Ask Your Birth Place

- Do they provide hot water?
- Is there a microwave or a fridge available?
- Can family bring in outside meals?
- Does the bathroom have a heater?



What to Expect in the First Hours/Days

The first hours after birth can feel full and unfamiliar, especially if this is your first time. There's a mix of rest, checks, and learning as you and your baby settle in.

In many birth settings, especially hospitals, you may experience:

- Regular checks on your vital signs
- Monitoring of your baby's feeding, diaper output, and overall condition
- Paperwork and documentation (often handled by your partner or support person)
- Newborn screening within the first day
- Guidance on feeding and basic newborn care
- Access to a lactation consultant or nurse for additional support (sometimes with a fee)

Every setting is a little different, but the goal is the same: to make sure you and your baby are stable, supported, and ready for the transition home.

Birth Story & Reflection

Every birth story matters, whether it unfolded as planned or took turns you never expected.

In the rush of caring for a newborn and tending to your own needs, your birth story can quietly slip into the background. But it matters. It deserves space, acknowledgment, and care.

Why this matters:

Taking time to reflect helps you recognize your strength. Even if parts felt hard or overwhelming, there were moments of courage, endurance, and instinct. Naming them helps you carry that strength into postpartum.

How to Begin

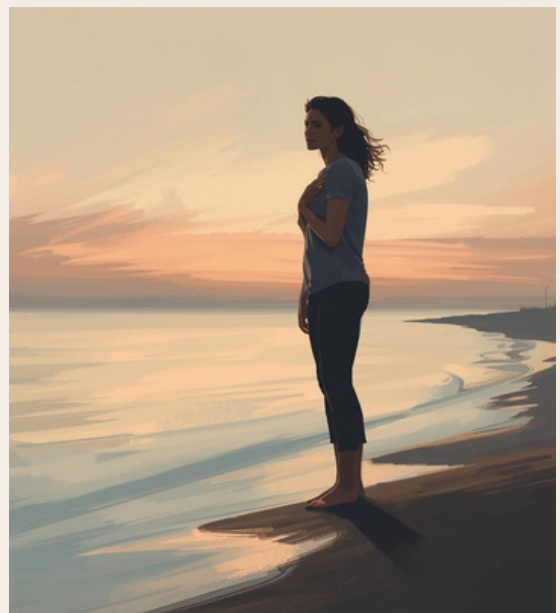
- **Write it down.** Capture your story while it's still fresh, even if it's just bullet points.
- **Say it out loud.** Share it with someone you trust: your partner, a close friend, or another mother who understands.
- **Mark the moment.** A small ritual like lighting a candle, taking a quiet walk, or simply pausing, can help you honor the transition. Some mothers even choose a symbolic “closing of the bones” ceremony.

Reflection Prompts

- What felt strongest in your birth?
- What surprised you?
- What felt most challenging?
- If you could speak to yourself in that moment, what would you say?

You can feel proud of your birth and still hold complicated emotions about it.

Birth changed you. Now begins the quieter work of caring, responding, and finding your rhythm together.



Learning Your Baby

The first weeks with your baby won't feel like normal life. Nights stretch long, and your days begin to revolve around feeding, resting, and responding.

Alongside caring for your baby, you're also adjusting. Your pace changes. Your routines shift. Even simple things can take more time and energy than before. It's natural to feel the mental and emotional weight of that, especially if this is your first time.

These weeks are not about getting things done. They're about getting to know your baby in real time. Babies will cry. And when nothing seems to settle them, it can feel overwhelming.

Crying is communication

Crying is your baby's first language. It's not a reflection of your ability to soothe. Babies cry because they need something.

Sometimes it's hunger.
Sometimes it's discomfort.
Sometimes it's closeness and help settling.

And sometimes, even after you've tried everything, they still cry.

When it feels like too much:

- If you can, share the load. Taking turns can make a big difference.
- You can place your baby safely in their crib and step away for a few minutes. Take slow breaths. Drink water.

You matter too, especially in these moments. Take the space you need to steady yourself.

You don't have to figure it out all at once. There are gentle approaches you can try next.



Soothing Your Baby

When your baby cries, your body responds too. Your stress hormones rise to help you act quickly. It's why you wake to your baby's sound, even when you're exhausted.

When your baby is hard to settle, using a few simple tools together can help you respond with more confidence.



Just so you know

Sometimes soothing feels steady. Other times it takes patience. Your calm presence often matters more than any single technique. Babies sense pace and tone. When you slow down, they often do too. Regulation goes both ways.

Everyday Rhythms: Feeding, Changing, Resting

In the early weeks, your days and nights will often move in a loop.

Feed.
Burp.
Change.
Settle.
Rest.
Repeat.

Your day will follow small cycles like this, though the order may shift.

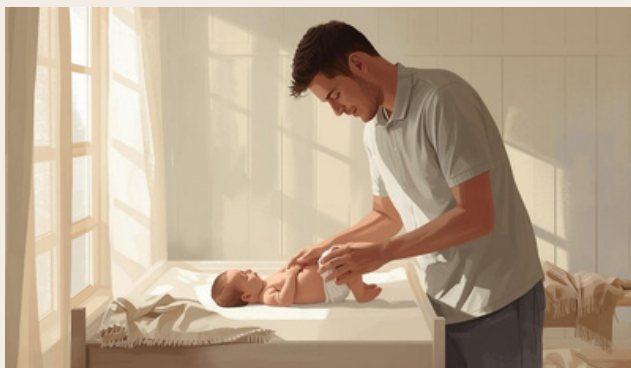
Rest can look different each time. Sometimes your baby will sleep. Other times they may just be calm or dozing.

Feeding

Newborns feed often. Their stomachs are small so frequent feeds, even close together, are normal.

Instead of watching the clock, notice your baby's cues: rooting, stirring, hand-to-mouth movements. Create one comfortable feeding space with water, snacks, and a pillow.

Feeding is a two-way exchange. Your baby needs milk, and you need hydration, nourishment, and rest to keep giving it.



Changing & Burping

Diaper changes and burping will quietly structure your time. Before long, you may find yourself changing diapers with your eyes half closed.

Sleep (for both of you)

Just as newborns feed often, they also wake often. Their internal clock is still developing so sleep comes in short stretches throughout the day and night.

As for you, rest may not always mean sleep. But when a window opens, choose it on purpose. Other things can wait. Scrolling on your phone can wait.

Sleep in this season rarely comes in long blocks. It comes in small pockets, and those still count. And while these nights can feel endless, this sleep-wake pattern is part of how your baby's brain and body grow.

Babywearing

Keeping your baby close can help both of you settle, especially in the early weeks. Many families continue babywearing beyond this stage.

Many babies calm when held against your body. The warmth, movement, and your heartbeat feel familiar after months in the womb.

Some babies take to it right away. Others need time, or may not prefer it.

Babywearing can help when:

- your baby wants to be held but you need your hands free
- you want to move around the house or step outside
- you are caring for other children

Safety reminder:

Make sure your baby's face is visible, airway clear, and chin not pressed into the chest. Their legs should be supported in a natural position. Choose a carrier that is suitable for newborns and feels secure for you. Ask for help if you need support with fit.

Like many things in the fourth trimester, it's about finding what works for you and your baby.



Breastfeeding: Nourishment and Connection

Breastfeeding is often one of the first skills you and your baby learn together. As IBCLC Jaimie Zaki shares, “If you try to learn about breastfeeding when your baby is already here, it’s like learning how to swim when you’re already drowning.”



Your body is made to nourish your baby. Breast milk is living food, made fresh and tailored to your baby’s needs each day.

It contains antibodies, beneficial bacteria, and nutrients that help protect your baby from infection, support gut health, and strengthen developing immunity.

When your baby latches and sucks, signals are sent to your brain to release two important hormones:

- Prolactin — helps your body produce milk
- Oxytocin — helps milk flow and supports that warm, connected feeling

Breastfeeding works on a supply-and-demand system. The more milk that’s removed through feeding or pumping, the more your body produces. Every drop counts.

Did You Know?

Babies who are exclusively breastfed for the first six months often have fewer infections and stronger immunity.

Breastfeeding also supports mothers by helping the uterus recover, lowering certain health risks, and releasing oxytocin for bonding and relaxation. *(Based on WHO and pediatric research.)*

Common Early Challenges & Gentle Solutions

Breastfeeding takes practice for both mother and baby. Many early challenges improve with time, small adjustments, and support.

- **Latch Pain or Nipple Soreness.** Mild discomfort can happen early on, but sharp or ongoing pain usually means baby's latch needs adjustment. Try different positions or seek help from a lactation consultant.
- **Engorgement.** Your breasts may feel very full a few days after birth. Nurse when you need to and use gentle massage. Warm compresses before feeding and cool compresses after can help ease the pressure.
- **Worrying About Milk Supply.** Many mothers produce enough milk. Feeding on demand, skin-to-skin contact, and staying hydrated help support supply. Instead of ounces, watch your baby's weight gain and diaper output.
- **Cluster Feeding.** Babies often nurse more frequently during growth spurts. This helps increase your milk supply. It's temporary, even though it can feel intense.

Breastfeeding Prep Checklist

- Nipple balm
- Nursing bras
- Milk catcher
- Pillow or back support
- Drinking water and snacks nearby
- Lactation consultant or support group contact

Feeding with Intention

Breast milk is uniquely designed to support your baby's growth and offers remarkable benefits for both mother and child. But feeding journeys do not always unfold as planned. Some mothers pump, combination feed, or use formula for medical or personal reasons.

What matters most is that your baby is nourished and that you feel supported. Connection grows in these feeding moments, not just in how feeding happens.

Supporting Older Siblings

Welcoming a new baby changes the rhythm of the whole family. For older siblings, it can bring excitement, curiosity, and strong emotions. Preparing them ahead of time and staying mindful of their needs in the early weeks can help everyone adjust more smoothly.



Before Baby Arrives

Help your older child feel included in the transition.

- Talk about the baby and what newborns are like
- Read books about becoming a big brother or sister
- Let them help prepare simple things for the baby
- Plan who will care for them when you go into labor
- Reassure them that your love for them does not change



During the Early Weeks

Adjustment takes time, and big feelings are normal.

- Invite them to help in small ways, like passing wipes, singing to the baby, or choosing a bedtime story
- Keep familiar routines when possible
- Praise their kindness and patience
- Set aside a few minutes of one-on-one time each day

With time and reassurance, many siblings grow into their new role with pride and affection. In time, the new baby becomes part of their everyday world.

For parents, this season can feel especially hard when you're tired and trying to keep the baby asleep. When your older child acts out, it's often their way of asking for connection. Let someone help when you can. Even a short break can make it easier to respond with more calm.



The Future of Postpartum Care

Babies do not come with a manual and even if they did, every baby would still rewrite the rules. Motherhood is a constant process of learning and growing alongside your child.

A well mother supports a well baby. And a supported mother helps a family thrive. Healing, nourishment, and rest after birth are not afterthoughts. They are the foundation for everything that follows.

Postpartum is more than recovery. It is a time to rebuild, rediscover yourself, and step into a new strength.

My hope is that every mother receives the care she deserves. That postpartum becomes a time when mothers are held, not hurried.

That fewer women suffer in silence from exhaustion, anxiety, depression, or depletion. And that more mothers begin their journey feeling supported and cared for.

The more we talk about real postpartum care, the more we change how motherhood is experienced for generations to come.

Because when we care for the mother, we care for the world that grows through her. 🌸



A Note from the Author

Thank you for letting me walk with you through this sacred season. I wrote this playbook from both my training in postpartum care and my own experience as a mother.

I remember being exhausted, wondering what would happen next, hoping to feel better soon.

That experience led me to look for a better way to recover after birth. To understand what postpartum can look and feel like when we prepare for it.

My hope is that these pages feel like a gentle hand on your shoulder. A reminder that your healing, nourishment, and happiness matter too.

Motherhood asks a lot from you. But you were never meant to carry it alone. 🧡

With love and solidarity,
Tin Episcopo
Postpartum Doula
Founder, After Birth Wellness



Postpartum care that honors your body, mind, and story.

