

A postpartum (after birth) plan is as important as a birth plan, though in a different way. New parents report that they suddenly find themselves at home, with their charming and needy baby, and hardly any idea of what to expect and what to do. After the birth, they need a plan to help assure that their needs and the baby's needs are met.

### Decisions to make for the postpartum period

Before the baby is born, new parents need to make many decisions to ease their transition into parenthood. As with the birth plan, these also require information gathering, discussion, and introspection. Decisions to make and things to think about include:

- Choose a health care provider for your baby. There are several types of health care providers for children. Explore your options (pediatrician, family physician, pediatric and family nurse practitioner, naturopath or other alternative practitioner).
- Choose your child's health care setting. This may depend on your health insurance: private care, children's health clinic, or well-child clinic.
- Think about visitors after the birth. Whom do you want and not want to visit you in the hospital or at home in the early weeks?
- Learn about classes and support groups.
- How will you feed your new baby – breast milk or formula?
- Who will help with household chores during the first week or two after the birth?
- What equipment and supplies will you need?
- Your personal postpartum resources list. Most families do not write a formal postpartum plan, but having the names and phone numbers of people and agencies that can help in a variety of ways is very helpful. This list may include family members, friends, the health care providers for mother and baby, the hospital maternity unit, a breastfeeding counselor, a breast pump rental service, a diaper service, a postpartum doula/helper, childbirth educator, and support groups.

***Pregnancy, Childbirth, and the Newborn*** has an entire chapter devoted to planning for birth and postpartum, for more detailed information.

For more information on pregnancy:

See our books: *Pregnancy, Childbirth & the Newborn* or *The Simple Guide to Having a Baby*.  
Take a childbirth preparation class at Great Starts, or in your local community.

For parenting tips, information for families, or to talk to someone about parenting:

**In Washington State:** Call the Family Help Line at 1-800-932-HOPE

**Outside of WA:** contact your local Circle of Parents agency at [www.circleofparents.org](http://www.circleofparents.org)

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