



POSTPARTUM CHECKLIST

As you're caring for your new baby, remember that caring for your own health is just as important.

Here are some conversation starters to take with you to your next appointment with your health care professional.



CARE AFTER DELIVERY

Be sure to schedule postpartum appointments and continue your care after initial postpartum visits with your health care professional.

- Do I still have any of my pregnancy-related conditions, such as gestational diabetes, gestational hypertension or preeclampsia? If so, how can I best monitor them? Should I see any specialists moving forward?
- During my pregnancy, I had (high blood pressure/gestational diabetes). How does this affect my future health or risk factors? Should I follow up with other specialists?
- I had a cesarean section or episiotomy — how does this impact my postpartum recovery?
- What do I need to know about postpartum birth control? (Talk to your provider about your breastfeeding plans as it can impact their recommendations for birth control.)
- What other care should I be doing for myself?



BLOOD PRESSURE

Like your heart rate, your blood pressure typically drops after delivery. But a high reading could indicate postpartum preeclampsia, which can occur even six weeks after pregnancy. Keep a log of your blood pressure readings.

- Should I monitor my blood pressure at home?
- What do I do if my blood pressure reading is greater than 120/80 mm Hg?
- How would a high reading affect my health? How can I lower it?



SYMPTOM AWARENESS

- Are there symptoms I need to look for postpartum?
- How long should I watch for these types of symptoms?

Call your health care professional if you have any of the following:

- Changes in vision
- Lingering headache
- Shortness of breath
- Swelling in your hands or face
- Nausea or vomiting
- Sudden weight gain
- Dizziness
- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Pain or swelling near the vagina or perineum
- Heavy or gushing blood from the vagina
- Foul-smelling discharge from the vagina
- Difficulty with urination, including pain or urinary frequency



WEIGHT

It's normal to gain weight during pregnancy, and your health care professional can tell you what your weight should be postpartum and how to get there in a healthy way.

- What should my goal weight be?
- How do you recommend I get there?
- How long should it take?



EXERCISE

It can be difficult finding the time to prioritize yourself when you're caring for a new baby, but it's important to exercise regularly. If you're still healing or need to reestablish a physical activity routine, you can start small by taking walks with your baby. Your health care team can tell you what types of exercises are best for you.

- How much should I be exercising?
- How do I build back up my strength?
- What types of workouts do you recommend (cardio/lifting weights/stretching)?



NUTRITION

Eating healthy is still important even after delivery. Proper nutrition will help your body recover and feel your best.

- Should I continue taking a daily prenatal or vitamin?
- Should my eating patterns change? Do I need to eat less now that I'm no longer pregnant?
- If I had (gestational diabetes/gestational hypertension/preeclampsia/eclampsia) while I was pregnant, should my diet change?



FEEDING YOUR BABY

A fed and nourished baby is most important whether you choose to breastfeed, pump or use infant formula. Just remember that when you're breastfeeding your baby is essentially eating what you're eating — just like when you were pregnant. Your health care professional or pediatrician can answer questions or provide information on available resources or support. Breastfeeding or pumping can have health benefits for you and your baby, including lowering risk of cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes.

- How long should I breastfeed and/or pump?
- Will breastfeeding and/or pumping help me lose weight?
- If I'm breastfeeding and/or pumping, should I be eating more? If I'm having trouble breastfeeding and/or pumping, where can I find help?
- What do I need to know about starting or stopping breastfeeding and/or pumping? How will it impact my body?
- How should I take care of my breasts if I'm breastfeeding?



SLEEP

It's a challenge for any new mom caring for a newborn to get enough sleep. But sleep can benefit your health in several ways: improve brain function; repair cells, tissue and blood vessels; strengthen the immune system; improve mood and energy; and lessen your risk of chronic disease.

- What are some ways I can get enough sleep when I'm up multiple times in the night caring for the baby?
- Do naps count toward my overall sleep goal?



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Women can expect changes in hormones and emotions throughout the pregnancy and postpartum. The “baby blues” are common for many postpartum women and typically go away after about two weeks. But some women experience postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety, postpartum psychosis and/or postpartum post-traumatic stress disorder. If you’re having prolonged or abnormal feelings of sadness, anxiety or other concerning behavior, talk to your health care team to get help. Share any concerns or feelings with your health care professional. Be open about any past depression, anxiety or family history.

- As a new mom, is it common to feel (stressed/exhausted/nervous)?
- How can I find time for myself when I’m pulled in so many directions?
- Is this level of (anxiety, sadness, anger, crying, worry, lack of interest, etc.) normal or perhaps a sign of something more serious?

For more support or to connect with other moms and caregivers who have experienced pregnancy-related cardiovascular conditions, check out the American Heart Association’s [Support Network Maternal Health Forum \(supportnetwork.heart.org\)](https://supportnetwork.heart.org).

To learn more, visit goredforwomen.org/pregnancy and have a conversation with your health care professional.