

How to get the most out of

# Your transition to motherhood



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# Hello Fourth Trimester....

Most people only ever talk of the three trimesters during pregnancy, so what's the fourth?

The fourth trimester is the postpartum period, the 12 weeks that follow after the birth of your baby.

During this time your body is undergoing huge hormonal shifts. ***The hormonal drop after birth is one of the largest hormonal drops in the shortest time period in a human life cycle.*** Along with hormonal changes, you are also experiencing great physical and emotional change too.



*I hope that this booklet gives you an insight into the postpartum period and the changes you may experience but also give you the tools and resources you need to get the most out of this period of motherhood.*

***Being a mum is both the most amazing and hardest thing you'll ever do.***

You don't just birth a baby, you rebirth a new version of yourself. ❤️

After birth women are just as vulnerable as their newborn babies.

Traditionally other women supported women during and after birth (Some known as doulas). Generally close friends and family members would look after the new mother, feeding and supporting her. Allowing her to bond and learn to breastfeed her baby while her friends and families took care of the other children, the cooking and cleaning.

During the postpartum period the mother is healing and adjusting to her new self and life with a new baby. Labour and birth require a huge amount of physical and emotional activity, similar to a marathon, so they require a lot of rest to replenish their energy to feel somewhat like themselves again.

These needs of the mother have been neglected in our culture. There are so many resources out there for pregnancy and birth but what about postpartum? Not many people consider the healing process that goes on for a mother after birth, physically, mentally and emotionally.

We are made to think we can do it all ourselves and we should just bounce back to our fast paced lives, going straight back to work, back to the gym and getting back to life as normal. But this just isn't reality for most. Which generally leaves mothers feeling deflated and like they are doing something wrong.

*The Postpartum healing phase is a necessity not a luxury.*

A lot of women are lead to believe that by the 6 week mark you will have recovered from birth. But just like pregnancy and birth all women are unique and will all have a different postpartum recovery. It can take up to 2 years for you to feel back to your pre baby self in some ways.

### **Immediately After Birth...**

You will begin to experience more contractions, this is to break away the placenta, once it comes away you will experience bleeding and more contractions also known as after birth pains. These are normal and just your uterus contracting back down to its pre pregnancy size and prevent excessive blood loss.



*Women will also experience 'after birth pains' whilst breast feeding, This is just your uterus contracting back to its pre pregnancy size.*

It is normal to experience swelling around the vulva, perineum and vagina in the first few weeks. The cervix has also been stretched and loses its elasticity and can take between 1 to 6 weeks to heal.

If you have had a C-section your healing journey will be different, If you would like information on that too feel free to ask.

The changes in oestrogen and progesterone decrease significantly which can cause mood changes.

***You're not being cranky and crazy, You've just had a baby.***

The blood loss you experience after birth is known as Lochia and will gradually decrease from a bright red to a brownish colour and usually ends around the 6 week mark if not sooner.

*Remember to have a good stock of maternity pads!*



From around 6 weeks to 6 months after birth the muscles and connective tissue returns to its pre pregnancy state. However it is not uncommon for it to be anywhere from 12 months to 2 years before a women feels she has gone back to her pre pregnancy state. All women are unique and will heal at their own pace.

# Body Changes

After birth you will lose weight due to the loss of the baby, placenta, blood loss and amniotic fluid. The days following the birth you will also continue to urinate more often as you are losing the excess fluid. Weight may also continue to be lost while breastfeeding. Your GP will be able to let you know when you are ready to start exercising and get back to normal activities again.

*Did you know Your uterus stretches around 15 times its pre pregnancy size, so it can take around 4-6 weeks for the uterus to return to its pre- pregnancy size.*

All women will recover from childbirth at their own rates. It's important for women to understand that it may take a while for them to go back to their pre- pregnancy size and for some that can take years, if at all.

Due to growing your perfect baby your abdominal muscles can take some time to adjust after being stretched for so long. Some women also end up with a pregnancy pouch which is also normal. A women's health physio is a good idea after birth to help with your pelvic floor muscles. (See Resources pages)

Stretch marks are also common, these will fade by themselves overtime and become less noticeable. This can cause some negative feelings towards your body which is normal. It's important to remember you have just grown a whole human and your body has just undergone huge changes and with time you will feel like yourself again.

Breastfeeding is a learned skill and doesn't always come naturally to everyone. It is also common to have cracked and sore nipples when learning how to attach and latch your baby. If you are experiencing difficulties and a lot of discomfort during breastfeeding it is important to get checked by a lactation consultant or a doctor. If you would like some more in depth information on breastfeeding feel free to ask.

*I don't feel like I feel I  
should feel....*

For some the transition into motherhood is calm and uneventful, but for others it can be a huge challenge adjusting and just surviving those first few weeks, months and even years.

Women all adjust differently and circumstances change in our lives when becoming a mother. Some mothers don't feel that instant love for their baby, we all adjust at our own pace.

Just be patient with yourself.

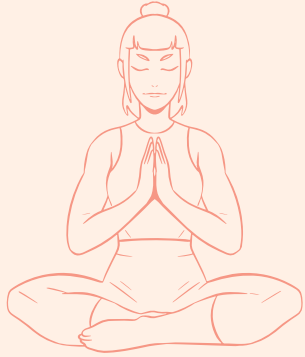
It isn't uncommon for some women to experience Isolation, loneliness and confusion once the excitement and euphoria of your baby comes to end and people stop coming to make a fuss. For some it can feel like a big shock.

Some women also go through a grieving process, feeling like they have lost themselves and their identity. The demands of life and work all change when you have a baby to consider, so reality generally sets in and motherhood isn't what they imagined it to be.

But with the right support and as time goes on you adjust.



## Don't forget to fill your own cup up.



Enjoying a book and a cuppa

Having a shower

Calling your friend for a chat

Light a candle

Wash and blow dry your hair

Do a face mask

Journal



Listen to a podcast or watch a good movie

## What can friends and family do to help?

Here are some things your friends and family can do to help:

Caring for other children

Taking other children out to the park

Cooking meals

Cleaning the House

Laundry and folding

Holding the baby while you fill your cup

Helping with the baby by nappy changing, bathing and dressing. These things are very helpful if you have had a caesarean birth.

**mealtrain.com is a fantastic resource. It is like a baby register but for meals.**

*If friends and family aren't an option for your situation a postpartum doula can also assist with these things.*



# THE 5-5-5 RULE

The 5 -5 -5 Rule was created to ensure mothers are managing their postpartum wellbeing and allowing their bodies to rest. This also is a perfect way to bond with your baby and avoid postpartum injuries. The 5 -5 -5 could look different for your family, each experience is unique and listen to your body.

**5 Days in bed** allowing our body time to rest, heal and bond with your baby.

**5 Days on the bed** is allowing yourself to gradually ease into more mobility but still staying close to your resting space

**5 Days Near the bed** is venturing a bit further while staying near your resting space.



*How a mother is treated during her pregnancy, labour and birth has a huge impact of her transition to motherhood..*

80% of new mothers report feeling overwhelmed.



The leading cause of maternal death is suicide.

As I have mentioned before, there is no one size fits all when it comes to any experience in motherhood. What one women felt was a good birth could feel like the complete opposite to another, and both are 100% valid.

## **Australian Postpartum Support Services**

Australia has several postpartum support initiatives aimed at providing comprehensive care and support for women during the postpartum period.

### **Medicare - funded Postnatal care -**

Australian residents are entitled to several postnatal visits with their health care providers (GP's, Midwife's or nurse).

**The Australian breastfeeding Association (ABA)**- Is a national organisation that offers support , education and resources for breastfeeding.

**National Perinatal Depression Initiative** - Are a government funded initiative that focuses on preventing and managing postpartum health issues including depression and anxiety.

# Extra Help

## Chiropractor

Purity Chiropractic - Fernvale  
07 3485 0863  
purity@puritychiropractic.com.au

## Physiotherapy

AAC - Esk (Located in medical centre)  
1300 574 462

## Bowen Therapy

Bodymechanic - Toogoolawah  
0408 078 205  
bodymechanicbowentherapy.com.au

## Counselling

Elizabeth Eaton Counselling & Parenting Support  
0407 930 091  
info@elizabethheatoncounselling.com.au

## Yoga

Toogoolawah Gym Offers classes

## Reiki Healing

Kokomo Reiki - Fernvale  
0418 882 102  
www.facebook.com/kokororeikiaustralia

## Breastfeeding Support

Australian breastfeeding Association  
Ipswich Group, QLD  
www.breastfeeding.asn.au

## Placenta Encapsulation

New Life Midwifery  
Ipswich  
3282 9614  
midwife@newlifemidwifery.com.au



**West Moreton Parent and child health** offer a range of support services including Parent education, baby wellbeing checks, healthy feeding, sleep and settling support, behaviour management programs.

*They have locations in Esk, Ipswich, Fernvale, Gatton and Laidley.*



# Other Helpful Links

Helping your older Child adjust to a new baby

A letter to my pregnant self

How to have a more positive mindset in motherhood

Top 5 Foods for newborn mothers

8 Relaxing Post- Baby self care tips

## My Personal Recommendations

I knew I needed to set a strong foundation for my babies sleep from a young age. Having a routine for a new born is unrealistic, but I found implementing things at sleep time to help baby transition into rest time, an absolute life saver. And to be honest i was worried about what kind of monster I might become if I didn't get sleep myself.

My main things I used with both of my babies were

- **Love to dream swaddles** - They have a double zip, having it easy for night changes and make baby feel safe and secure like they are still in the womb, and they cant unwrap themselves.

[Click here for the website](#)

- **White Noise** - I had a portable white noise machine that went with us everywhere. It could easily clip into the car or pram. I also had one for their bedroom, which also had a red light on it to help with melatonin production.

[Click here for Portable](#)

[Click here for non portable \(red light\)](#)

- **A Dummy** - Controversial I know, but for me I found them a great way to soothe my babies while getting ready or waiting for a feed. When they were old enough they could find it themselves at night and settle themselves back to sleep.
- **Riff Raff sleep toy** - I didn't get one of these until about 6-7 Months old, but I found it to be a big comfort when it came to weaning off the dummy and bottle.

***A UK maternity hospital shared a touching open letter to mums and dads and it's one they need to print out, stick on the fridge door and read when times are tough.***

Dear Mummy and Daddy

Please keep this letter from me in a place where you can read it and re-read it when things are rough, and you are feeling down.

Please don't expect too much from me as a new born baby, or too much from

yourselves as parents. Give us both six weeks as a birthday present, six weeks for me to grow, develop, mature, and become more stable and predictable – six weeks for you to rest and relax and allow your body to get back to normal.

Please feed me when I am hungry, I never knew hunger in your womb and clocks and time mean little to me.

Please hold, cuddle, kiss, touch, stroke and croon to me. I was always held closely in your womb and have never been alone before.

Please forgive me if I cry a lot. I am not a tyrant who was sent to make your life

miserable, the only way I can tell you I am not happy is with my cry, bear with me and in a short time, as I mature, I will spend less time crying and more time socializing.

Please take the time to find out who I am, how I differ from you and how much I can bring to you. Watch me carefully and I'll tell you things which sooth, console and please me.

Please remember that I am resilient and can withstand the many natural mistakes

you'll make with me. As long as you make them with love, I cannot be harmed.

Please don't be disappointed when I am not the perfect baby you expected nor be disappointed with yourselves when you are not the perfect parents.

Please take care of yourself; eat a balanced diet, rest, and exercise so that when we are together, you have the patience and energy to take care of me.

The cure for a fussy baby is more rest for Mum.

Please take care of your relationship with each other. What good is family bonding if there is no family left for me to bond with.

Keep the "big picture" in mind. I'll be like this for a very short time, though it seems like forever to you now. Although I may have turned your life upside down, please remind yourselves that things will be back to normal before long.

Enjoy me – I'll never be this little again



*I hope you found this information booklet useful and helpful. Good Luck on your postpartum Journey.*

*if you have any further questions, or would like information on anything else feel free to contact me.*

