

Postpartum Basics

© 2024, TPMG, Inc. All rights reserved

KAISER PERMANENTE®



Relationship Tips That Really Work and Your Survival Kit

- **Create "sacred times" for you as a couple**. A weekly date (even at home), a morning meditation time, a nightly "decompression" talk about the day's events (even if only 10 to 15 minutes, and even if you are physically apart). Be creative and be consistent.
- **Try using "60 Second Pleasure Points" across the day.** Fun and even sensual activities that a couple can do, can last a minute or less! A quick massage; sharing a piece of fruit; an embrace; a hug or kiss; dancing; and, when apart, a quick phone call or an affectionate email or text.
- **Try to arrange regular family time**. Several studies show that families highly value having at least one meal together daily, and many pull it off. Schedule other times that everyone can count on for fun. Make Sundays restful and geared for family activities. Try new things to do and new places to explore and visit!
- **Cuddle at the most important time of the day**. Most couples fit their cuddles in at the end of the day. But morning is even more rewarding. The physical contact will keep you feeling close to each other all during the day and feeling loved.
- **Ask each other one simple question before heading out the door**. Anything special going on today? Can I do anything for you today? Building trust, understanding, and rapport makes you feel connected. Walk your partner out to the car and wave goodbye!
- **Share what you like about each other**. If there is something you appreciate about your partner, about each other's parenting skills, the way a project was done, speak up and tell them. Praise works wonders and often pays off when it is time to work out differences.
- **Do small kindnesses for each other**. What goes around, comes around, they say! Clipping out newspaper articles, or cartoons your partner might enjoy; bringing a surprise beverage; treating to ice cream when "out and about"; shows love in the simplest way. Bringing home a flower can melt a heart or fixing a special dessert or putting a love note in a lunch box or briefcase can work wonders! Try sending a greeting card, an eCard, or a short text to each other.
- **Try this instant stress buster**! Spend 5 minutes each day griping to each other about the day's stresses, taking turns talking. This brings relief which feels great. Then go take a walk as a family. Endorphins will kick in and help is on the way.
- **Communicate with a sense of humor**! Laughter is healing and we all need it. A little goes a long way. Do not let a day go by without putting on a happy face.
- **Other ideas**: write below



Feelings After Birth

Baby Blues are common during the first one-to-two weeks after delivery and can be a normal part of the childbirth process. Symptoms of the "Baby Blues" may be crying for no apparent reason, and/or feelings of guilt or resentment.

With the "Baby Blues" you should be able to sleep at night and your appetite should be normal. The "Baby Blues" should not last too much longer than a week and should not increase in intensity but decrease with time. If these are your symptoms, but they increase daily, it may be a sign of Postpartum Depression.

Postpartum Depression: The first symptoms occur within 3 to 10 days, but onset may be anytime within 12 months after your delivery. Symptoms are similar to the "Baby Blues," but the feelings become more intense with time and the duration is longer. Identifiable symptoms are:

- Nervousness, anxiety, panic
- Lack of ability to fall asleep at night
- Lack of appetite
- Sadness, depression, hopelessness
- Increase in unusual fears, afraid to leave your baby or sleep when your baby is sleeping
- Uncontrollable crying, fear of harming, or lack of interest in your baby
- Exaggerated highs or lows

Any woman can be affected by Postpartum Depression after the birth of a baby. After you have a baby, you undergo an enormous biochemical change, as well as the social and psychological adjustment associated with becoming a new mother and this new addition to your family. If you think you may have these symptoms, and are looking for help, contact your local Mental Health Department.

- Santa Clara Medical Center Psychiatry Department 1-408-366-4400 (press 4)

Further Support Information:

Resources:

- Postpartum Support International by phone 1-800-944-4773
- Bay Area Postpartum Depression Stress Line 1-800-944-4773
- KP Social Services 1-408-851-7080
- Perinatal Social Worker 1-408-851-3031

Internet Resources:

- kp.org/mydoctor/pregnancy
- kp.org/newsletters
- mchb.hrsa.gov/pregnancyandbeyond/ depression
- womenshealth.gov
- postpartum.net
- Gottman.com/parents



Who Does What?
Mom's Survey

Baby Care:

Use the 1 to 9 scale to indicate how much responsibility you want to take for baby care. Then, write how much responsibility you expect you'll actually have. Six weeks or so after the baby comes, write down how much responsibility you are taking. Share your answers with your partner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Mom's Responsibility — Both Share Equally — Partner's Responsibility

Activity	What I'd Like	What I Really Expect	How it is at 6 Weeks
1. Feeding			
2. Deciding when the baby needs to be fed			
3. Changing diapers			
4. Bathing and dressing			
5. Doing baby's laundry			
6. Deciding whether to respond to baby's cry			
7. Responding to baby's cries in the middle of the			
8. Taking baby out for walks, drives, visits			
9. Choosing baby's toys			
10. Dealing with doctor about baby's health			
11. Arranging for babysitters			

While She's Still Pregnant:

- Compare your results with those of your partner. Are your expectations similar or different? Can you make a plan to bring you more into agreement?



Who Does What?
Mom's Survey

Household Tasks:

Use the 1 to 9 scale to indicate how you and your partner take responsibility for the following activities now. Then, assign a number to how you think it will be when the baby comes. Six or so weeks after the baby arrives, redo this survey to show how it really is.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Mom's Responsibility — Both Share Equally — Partner's Responsibility

Activity	What I'd Like	What I Really Expect	How it is at 6 Weeks
1. Planning and preparing meals			
2. Cleaning up after meals			
3. Repairs around the house			
4. House cleaning			
5. Shopping for groceries			
6. Paying bills			
7. Washing clothes			
8. Making social arrangements			
9. Calling/writing to family and friends			
10. Looking after car(s)			
11. Family income			

While She's Still Pregnant:

- Compare your answers to your partner's. Note any differences.
- List the areas where you expect the biggest changes.



Getting Ready and Beyond

A guide for the last 6 weeks before the birth of your baby.
Help for friends and family once home with your new baby.

Make a list of friends, relatives, and work associates who might be willing to bring a meal, do a chore, and/or watch the sibling(s) once baby comes home.

Make a contact list of friends, relatives, and work associates need to be called, texted or emailed after the birth of your baby. Have one designated person contact everyone (except those special friends or relatives you want to contact personally) with the announcement.
This saves you from telling the same story over and over at a time when you may be exhausted and need to rest.

Regarding meals…

- In the last few weeks before your baby is born, double the portions of the evening meal and freeze half for later after the baby comes.
- If meals are coming from family or friends, schedule meals for every other day (usually there is a lot of food; meaning leftovers the next day).
- Let family and friends know of any dietary considerations - especially for the nursing mom to avoid. Baby would appreciate avoiding the following types of foods: very spicy, garlic, broccoli, cabbage, onions, brussel sprouts, and cauliflower.
- If possible meals should be placed in disposable containers. This is less work for cleaning up and you do not have to keep track of returning items.
- Request family and friends include heating instructions, if necessary. Flowers, candles, and dessert are a nice touch.
- Meals should arrive earlier than later in the day.
- Whoever is providing the meal that night should call before they come for the best time of arrival with the meal, and to see if there are any errands that could be done on the way.
- Let family and friends know that when they bring the meal, they can only stay for a short time.
- If there is a chore such as loading the dishwashing or washing a few dishes, folding some laundry, or whatever might be helpful.

Other tips…

- If there are older siblings that are comfortable with the visitors, they might offer to take them out for an hour or so, to give you bonding or resting time with the new baby.
- For those friends or family members who hate to cook, there are plenty of healthy take out options.
- Housework is always welcome and needed.
- Childcare for older siblings.
- Pet needs: walking, feeding, or cleaning up after the pet.
- A massage is a great gift for a postpartum mom and partner, too.
- Go over for an afternoon and hold the baby while mom gets a nap or a shower.
- Other Ideas



Postpartum Resources

Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara Medical Center:

- Labor & Delivery Department - 700 Lawrence Expressway, Santa Clara, CA 95051.
  Hospital Building; Dept 300, 3rd Floor

- Labor & Delivery Phone Numbers:
  - Santa Clara 408-851-7315
  - San Jose 408-972-7502
  - San Leandro 510-454-4267
  - Redwood City 650-299-3200
- Labor & Delivery Video Tour: www.kp.org/santaclara
  -enter Labor & Delivery Video Tour in search box

- Health Education Departments:
  Santa Clara Medical Office, 408-851-3800
  Milpitas Medical Office, 408-945-2732
  Campbell Medical Office, 408-871-6463
  Mountain View Medical Office, 650-903-2636

- My Doctor Online Website: www.kp.org/mydoctor
  - Your OB provider's homepage. Enter your OB's name into the search bar.
  - Pregnancy Portal: www.kp.org/mydoctor/pregnancy
  - Pregnancy and Childbirth Emmi's: (enter the Emmi name in the search bar)
    - Pregnancy and Depression (Emmi)
    - Physical Postpartum Care
    - Gestational Diabetes (Emmi)

Kaiser Permanente Support Groups:

- Baby & Me Online Support Group - Santa Clara, 408-851-3800
- Prenatal/Postpartum Depression/Anxiety, Santa Clara Adult Psychiatry, 408-366-4400

Community Resources*:

- Postpartum Support International (PSI): www.postpartum.net
  - Postpartum (PSI) Warmline: 1-800-944-4773
- Las Madres Neighborhood Play Groups: www.lasmadres.org
- Bay Area Birth Information (BABI): www.bayareabirthinfo.org
- DONA International: www.dona.org (Doula organization)
- SeatCheck: www.seatcheck.org or www.nhtsa.gov
- La Leche League www.LLLi.org

*Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the use of the above resources/retailers.



Postpartum Exercise Guidelines

The first six weeks:

Many of the body/hormonal/postural changes that occur during pregnancy linger on several weeks after delivery. Because of this and the added fatigue of newborn care you need to gradually return to your regular exercise routine.

Contract your pelvic floor and abdominal muscles when lifting to help protect your low back as well as to begin to re-strengthen these areas. Do this by gently tightening the vaginal and rectal muscles as if to hold in urine and gas while also pulling in abdominal muscles as if to zip up tight jeans. Breathe normally as you do this.

Try to do 10 pelvic floor contractions – squeeze the vaginal rectal muscles as if to hold in urine and gas holding 5 to 10 counts while feeing your baby. Pelvic floor exercise in the immediate postpartum period helps re-strengthen these muscles, supports the spine/pelvic girdle and may help prevent urinary incontinence.

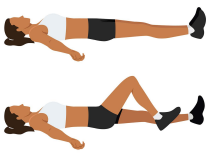
Resume walking, increasing the length of time in 15 minute increments. Gradually increase your speed to brisk walking as your energy level returns.

Before beginning abdominal exercise check to see that you do not have a separation of your abdominal muscles know as a "diastasis recti." Check this by lying on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the bed. Put your fingers about a hand width above and below belly button. Now lift your head to just clear the bed. If the abdominal muscles gap more than 2 finger widths apart, check with your ob/gyn provider before beginning abdominal muscle exercises.

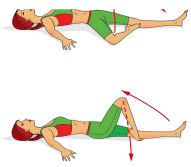
The next 6 to 12 weeks

At 6 weeks postpartum, you can start to resume your regular exercise routines. Because you are still recovering from delivery, you should exercise for less time and at a lower intensity than pre-pregnancy and gradually increase to your regular routine. The following exercises will help you re-strengthen the lower abdominals:

1. One leg heel slide: Lie on your back with knees bent. Contract pelvic floor and abdominal muscles as you slowly slide one heel away from your body until your leg is straight. Relax. Contract muscles again as you slide your heel back to the start position. Begin with 10 repetitions on each side and work to 20-to-30 repetitions.



2. Single leg fall out: Lie on your back with knees bent, hip width apart and feet flat on the floor. Breathe in. As you breathe out, contract your pelvic floor muscles and let one leg fall out to the side. Relax. Do a pelvic floor contraction and bring legs back to starting position. Begin with 10 repetitions on each leg and work to 20. When you can do 20 with each leg begin to do both legs together. Start with 10 and work to 20.



3. On hands and knees: On your bed get into a hands and knees position so that you are square: hands under shoulders and knees below hips. Maintain the normal curve of your lower back. Breathe in and as you breathe out contact your pelvic floor muscles and gently pull abdominal muscles toward your spine. Begin with 10 repetitions holding 5 seconds, work to 2 sets of 10 repetitions, holding 10 seconds.





Exercise after C-section

Initial Exercises – After Discharge from Hospital:

1. Abdominal strengthening: Tighten the vaginal/rectal muscles as if to hold in urine/gas. Then, draw in your lower abdominals toward your spine while breathing normally. Hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat for 10 repetitions; first while lying on your back with your knees bent; then sitting; then standing.
2. One leg heel slide: Lie on your back with knees bent. Contract pelvic floor and abdominal muscles as you slowly slide one heel away from your body until your leg is straight. Relax. Contract muscles again as you slide your heel back to the start position. Begin with 10 repetitions on each side and work to 20- to-30 repetitions.
3. Pelvic Floor exercises: Kegels: tighten the vaginal/rectal muscles as if to hold in urine/gas, build this muscle contraction to about 80% of maximum effort. Hold for 5 to 10 seconds, rest a few seconds, and repeat. Do 3 sets of 10 per day to help maintain pelvic floor muscle strength and prevent urinary incontinence.

Exercises After your Incision is Healed – Repairing the Pelvic Floor:

1. Continue Heel Slide: Lie on your back with knees bent. Contract pelvic floor and abdominal muscles as you slowly slide one heel away from your body until your leg is straight. Relax. Contract muscles again as you slide your heel back to the start position. Begin with 10 repetitions on each side and work to 20-to-30 repetitions.
2. Progress to One Leg Fall Out: Lie on your back with your knees bent. Contract kegels and tighten abdominals, then let one leg fall passively out to the side. Do not allow your pelvis to roll. Then bring leg back to midline while still maintaining kegel and abdominal muscle contraction. Repeat 10 times with each leg.

Scar Mobilization

If you have C-section it is important to prevent scar tissue from adhering to the muscle layer below your incision. You can begin as soon as the incision is healed. Your goal is to free the scar from the muscles below.

- Use your fingers to massage along and across the scar. Do this 2 to 3 times per day for 5 minutes.
- Do not rub so hard that it causes pain.

With Baby

1. Support your baby with pillow when nursing or feeding to minimize neck and upper back strain. Bring your baby up to your breast or bottle. Do not lean forward towards the baby.
2. Carry your baby in front of you or in a stroller; avoid carrying your baby on one hip. Avoid using the car seat as a baby carrier.
3. Use an elevated changing table and bend at the knees.
4. Use a pelvic brace (kegel and abdominal contractions and exhale) when lifting.

As you return to your previous (pre-pregnancy) exercises, be mindful of your body's hormonal changes, especially if you are breastfeeding. Progress slowly so that you do not cause injury by overstraining ligaments and muscles. Start with low-impact exercises.

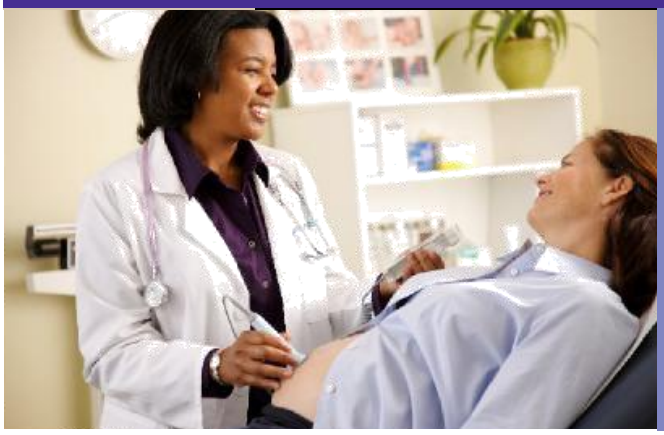
Go to kp.org/mydoctor/pregnancy to get more information on "After Your Baby is Born"

Postpartum Care



Physical Changes	Hospital provided items	Suggested items to purchase for care kit
• Uterine cramps, bleeding • Perineum • Constipation, hemorrhoids • Difficulty urinating • Swelling, edema • Night sweats • Hormone changes • Breasts		

Applying for Pregnancy Leave or Disability



Visit kp.org/requestrecords to complete your state disability insurance certification request or to apply for Family Medical Leave of Absence (FMLA). You will be prompted to log in to your kp.org account.

We are here to help you apply for pregnancy leave or disability.

It is best to check with your employer first to find out what benefits are available to you. Not everyone is eligible for the leave options discussed here. Always check the websites below for up-to-date and more detailed information.

State Disability Insurance (SDI) If you qualify for SDI insurance & have a normal pregnancy, State Disability (EDD-Employment Development Department) is usually 4 weeks before your due date and 6 weeks after a vaginal birth (or 8 weeks following a cesarean). Please note that if you do not use your pre-delivery disability leave that it cannot be added to your post-delivery leave time. Your physician/provider may certify a longer period if you develop a pregnancy complication that makes you unable to perform your regular job duties. Visit **www.edd.ca.gov** for more information.

Paid Family Leave (PFL) Some women are eligible for an additional 6 weeks of benefits to bond with their new baby. The PFL program is administered by EDD, not your employer – it provides eligible workers with partial wage replacement when taking time off work to care for or bond with a child, grandchild, spouse, or partner. It is important to communicate with your employer about PFL. PFL provides benefits but does not provide job protection or return rights. You have 1 year from the day your baby is born to use the 6 weeks of PFL. Please note that if you already have an approved disability claim for maternity leave, you will automatically be sent the form to transition to PFL for baby bonding. You can also file the PFL claim form through SDI. Visit **www.edd.ca.gov/disability** for additional information.

Family Medical Leave of Absence (FMLA) allows eligible employees to take unpaid, job-protected leave, for up to 12 weeks within a 12month period, for a specified medical reason with continuation of health insurance coverage. The birth of a child or the need to care for a newborn child within one year of birth qualifies as a medical reason to be eligible for FMLA. Speak with your employer to find out if you qualify for FMLA benefits. In order to qualify for FMLA you much work for a FMLA covered employer, have worked for the employer for a total of 12 months, and have worked at least 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months. To find out more visit **www.dol.gov/whd/fmla**

Applying for Pregnancy Leave or Disability

If I qualify, how do I apply for pregnancy disability?

1. First, contact your employer and discuss your plan for pregnancy leave. This is the best time to clarify what specific benefits you are eligible for. Gather any forms that your employer requires for leave benefits. Please note that different employers may require different paperwork.
2. Request a **Work/Activity Status Form (WASF)** from your physician/provider. The WASF will serve as your medical documentation for all leave purposes. Please note that the **San Jose Release of Medical Information Department (Formerly known as the Medical Secretary Department)** cannot help processing your leave until your provider completes your WASF.
3. Apply for SDI online at **www.edd.ca.gov/disability** (this is a two part process: first create an account with SDI and then submit application through that account). EDD will only accept your disability application on or after the start date of your leave. Once your application is complete you will see a confirmation page. Write down the receipt number (R+15 digits) that displays once the claim was submitted.
4. Once you have followed the above steps, visit the Release of Medical Information Department with the following:
    - Receipt Number (R+15 digits) number
    - Any additional documentation from your employer.

The release of Medical Information Department will help process your disability leave and address any additional questions or concerns. Please note that email communication is preferred.

Kaiser Permanente SCH Release of Medical Information Department

Phone: 408-851-1750 Email: Santa.Clara.ROI.Dept@kp.org

How does my partner apply for time off to bond with the baby? Many partners want to take time off to bond with their newborn. It is important that partners contact their employer to find out what benefits they qualify for. It is best to collect as much information and documentation from their employer before baby arrives, so that they can submit the proper forms after baby is born. Following delivery, the hospital birth recorder will give you a "**Verification of Birth Letter**" form. This form is the verification letter you need to submit to EDD and your employer if you are eligible for bonding benefits. You should not require any further documentation to submit your claim. To apply online for paid family leave visit **www.edd.ca.gov/disability** or for more information call **1-877-238-4373**

Additional Resources

- **www.kp.org/requestrecords (Kaiser Permanente: Records, forms, & certifications)**
- **www.edd.ca.gov (EDD/PFL)**
- **www.ssa.gov (Social Security Administration)**
- **www.dol.gov (Department of Labor)**
- **www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/ (Family Medical Leave of Absence)**

© 2024, TPMG, Inc. All rights reserved

KAISER PERMANENTE®