

Postpartum care: Supporting mom and baby as a caregiver



Being a caregiver is one of the most important and rewarding roles you can have, as your support helps both mom and baby. This guidebook is here to help you support a mom during the postpartum period. Whether you're a partner, spouse, friend, family member, or caregiver, your support is helpful. By learning how to assist with the baby's care and being there for mom emotionally, you're helping both mom and baby thrive. Thank you for being there when they need it most.

Thank you for choosing Welcoming BabySM for your caregiver resources. For more information about Welcoming Baby, please call **1-844-671-2108 (TTY: 711)**, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or email us at **welcomingbaby@sentara.com**.

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Supporting mom during bottle and breastfeeding

As a caregiver, you play an important role in helping mom during feeding time, and your involvement can truly make a difference. Whether she's breastfeeding or bottle-feeding, here are some ways you can lend a hand:

- Establish a feeding schedule: Help create a routine that works for both mom and baby, making feeding times smoother and more predictable.
- Create a cozy space: Set up a comfortable environment where mom can relax and bond with her little one, complete with cozy pillows, soft lighting, and everything she needs at arm's reach.
- Prepare bottles: Take charge of bottle prep, ensuring they're ready to go when it's time to feed. This not only saves time but also allows the mom to focus on moments with the baby.
- Take the baby after breastfeeding: Burp, hold, or soothe the baby so mom can relax or rest.
- Clean pump parts and bottles: Handle the cleanup after a pumping session to lighten mom's load.
- Change the baby's diaper after feeding: Give mom a break by taking over the diaper duty so she can relax or rest.

Your support can make feeding a joyful experience for both mom and her little one.



Safe sleep practices and infant sleep training

Babies need a safe sleeping environment to stay healthy. You can help by following crib safety guidelines and helping mom set up a sleep routine. This ensures both the baby and mom get better rest. Following the simple “ABCs” of safe sleep can help make this easy.

1. **Alone** – Your baby should sleep alone in their sleep space, on a firm surface, and on their back, unless your doctor says otherwise. Their crib or bassinet can be in the same room as you so you can be there for them.
2. **Apart** – Your baby should sleep apart from any objects, pillows, or blankets that could put them at risk. Toys and soft bedding increase the risk of death.
3. **Always** – You should always follow safe sleep practices, during every sleep, and with every caregiver.

Learn more about safe sleep and take the free safe sleep course at safesleepacademy.org and dss.virginia.gov/safe_sleep.



Remember these three easy steps for your baby to sleep safely—**Alone, Apart, and Always.** These three actions can help prevent sudden unexpected infant death (SUID).

Understanding baby cues and bonding

Babies have their own ways of communicating. You can help mom by learning how babies show they are hungry, tired, and need comfort. Understanding these cues lets you step in when needed and help mom bond with her baby, making their emotional connection stronger.

Here are some common signs that babies use when communicating:

- When a baby is hungry, they might suck on their hands or become restless.
- If the baby is tired, they might yawn or rub their eyes.
- If the baby needs comfort, they may cry or want to be held.

Knowing these signs helps you support mom when she needs a break or a little extra help.



Emotional health support:

Signs and symptoms



Caring for the mom's emotional health is just as important as caring for the baby. After childbirth, moms may experience different emotions, such as sadness or anxiety. As a caregiver, it's important to watch for signs of postpartum depression or the baby blues.

- If you notice that mom is showing signs of the baby blues, reassure her that it's normal to feel emotional after giving birth.
- Encourage her to rest, eat healthy meals, and reach out to loved ones for support.
- If mom's symptoms persist or get worse, encourage her to talk to a doctor or counselor.

Postpartum depression is a medical condition, and it's important to seek help. Professional support and treatment can make a big difference.



Signs and Symptoms	Baby Blues	Postpartum Depression
When it starts	Begins within the first few days after birth and usually lasts a few days to two weeks.	Can start anytime during the first year after birth and may last much longer.
Mood changes	Feeling sad, overwhelmed, or anxious, but able to feel happy at times.	Constant feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or emptiness.
Energy levels	Mild tiredness or fatigue.	Extreme tiredness and lack of energy, even after rest.
Sleep patterns	Trouble sleeping or feeling more emotional during the night.	Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much, even when the baby is asleep.
Appetite	May have mild changes in appetite, often not a big issue.	Significant changes in appetite—either eating too much or not eating enough.
Crying	Mild crying or feeling emotional.	Excessive crying or feeling overwhelmed without clear reason.
Ability to function	Able to care for the baby and manage daily tasks.	Difficulty bonding with the baby or completing daily tasks.

Vaccinations and pediatrician visits

You can help mom take care of the baby's health by keeping track of doctor visits and vaccinations, which are important for the baby. During these visits, you can support mom by asking questions or offering to go along with her for help. These visits help make sure the baby is growing well and developing as expected.

Parenting support

As a caregiver, you play a key role in offering emotional and practical support to mom as she adjusts to motherhood. Your support can boost her confidence in her new role. Whether it's offering a break when needed, preparing food or a healthy snack, or simply listening when she needs to talk, your presence makes a difference. It's natural for mom to feel uncertain at times, and that's okay. Remind her that it's okay to ask for help and take time for herself when needed.

Relationship support

Having a baby can change the way a mom connects with her partner, family, and friends. As a caregiver, you can help mom stay close to her loved ones during this busy time. Encourage healthy communication and help her find moments to reconnect.

Ways you can help mom stay connected:

- Suggest simple activities to do together.
- Encourage her to talk and share her feelings.
- Enjoy a meal or snack together.
- Remind her it's okay to ask for help when needed.
- Start conversations about topics other than the baby.

Balancing responsibilities in the home

You can help mom manage household tasks while she adjusts to life with a newborn. Take on chores, prepare meals, and step in so she can shower, go for a walk, or get some much-needed sleep. By giving her those breaks you'll give her more time to rest and focus on herself and the baby. Reducing some of her responsibilities will help lessen her stress. Encourage her to ask for help when needed and remind her that taking breaks is important for her health.

Nutrition and diet (healthy meals and hydration)



It's important for mom to stay hydrated and eat healthy foods to stay strong and energized after giving birth. Simple, nutritious, high-protein meals and snacks can help keep her energy up. As a caregiver, you can offer to prepare easy-to-eat meals and snacks while she cares for the baby. Be sure to remind her to drink plenty of water, especially if she's breastfeeding.

Did you know that after giving birth, a mother can receive 56 home-delivered meals to help support her recovery at home? For more information about home-delivered meals, please call Member Services at **1-800-881-2166 (TTY: 711)**, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.



Contact us

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