

the postpartum recovery kit

everything to have in the house before the baby comes — because the registry is all for the baby, and the hospital sends you home with about a day and a half of the good stuff.

THE BATHROOM — BUY THIS FIRST

- ☐ **angled peri bottle** — not the hospital squeeze bottle. the angle means you don't have to contort while sitting on stitches. under \$10, biggest difference on this list.
- ☐ **high-waisted disposable underwear** — more than you think. sits above a c-section incision instead of on it, and you throw them away.
- ☐ **overnight maxi pads, the long thick kind** — nothing internal for about six weeks, so buy in volume.
- ☐ **witch hazel pads** — layered on top of the pad.
- ☐ **perineal cold packs** — first 24–48 hours especially. instant ones beat homemade at 3am.
- ☐ **sitz bath basin** — sits on the toilet. warm water, ten minutes, a few times a day.
- ☐ **stool softener** — ask your provider what they want you taking, then take it *before* you need it.

IF YOU'RE NURSING

- ☐ **nipple ointment** — start day one, before anything hurts.
- ☐ **hydrogel pads** — for when it's past that.
- ☐ **disposable nursing pads** — the leaking lasts longer than anyone mentions.

FOR THE ACTUAL HUMAN

- ☐ **insulated bottle with a straw** — you'll have one usable hand. this is the difference between drinking water and not.
- ☐ **abdominal binder** — c-section only, and ask first.
- ☐ **snacks within arm's reach** — of the feeding chair, not the kitchen.

SKIP THESE

postpartum “waist trainers” and snapback wraps · anything promising to close a diastasis on its own · “recovery” teas · the entire category of things sold to you in week two on the promise you should already look like week minus forty.

ASK FOR THESE BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE HOSPITAL

- who do i call after hours, and what number is it — write it on this sheet now
- what pain relief am i taking, how much, and how far apart
- what does my bleeding have to look like for me to call you
- when is my first check-in — not my six-week visit, my *first* one

WRITE IT DOWN WHILE SOMEBODY IS STILL IN THE ROOM

AFTER-HOURS NUMBER

MY PROVIDER

PEDIATRICIAN

FIRST CHECK-IN

what's normal, and what's a phone call

where somebody else in the house can read it too. that's the point of this page.

CALL YOUR PROVIDER OR GO IN — ANY OF THESE, ANY TIME IN THE YEAR AFTER BIRTH

- headache that won't go away or gets worse
- changes in your vision — blurring, spots, flashes
- dizziness or fainting
- fever of 100.4°F or higher
- extreme swelling of hands or face
- thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- trouble breathing
- chest pain or a fast-beating heart
- severe nausea and vomiting
- severe belly pain that doesn't go away
- heavy vaginal bleeding or fluid leaking
- swelling, redness or pain in a leg or arm
- overwhelming tiredness sleep doesn't touch
- soaking a pad every hour, or golf-ball clots

SAY THIS SENTENCE WHEN YOU CALL

"i gave birth ____ weeks ago." it changes how you get triaged. and preeclampsia can start *after* delivery in someone who never had it while pregnant — most within 48 hours, but it can show up six weeks out or later. a headache that won't clear plus vision changes plus swelling is a phone call, not new-mom tiredness.

THE BLEEDING, SINCE NOBODY GIVES YOU A TIMELINE

DAYS 1–4	dark or bright red, heavy like a heavy period. small clots and cramping are expected.
DAYS 4–12	pinkish-brown, thinner and more watery. fewer clots or none.
DAY 12 ON	yellowish-white, barely any blood. a thin liner is enough.
ABOUT 6 WEEKS	usually done. sometimes closer to eight. going back to red after a busy day is your body telling you to sit down.

THE TIMELINE NOBODY TOLD ME

- you should have contact with your provider **within three weeks** of birth — in person or by phone.
- the comprehensive visit comes **no later than twelve weeks**. six weeks was never meant to be a finish line.
- had high blood pressure in pregnancy? that follow-up is **days, not weeks**.
- "i'd like a check-in before six weeks" is a whole sentence. nobody will be annoyed with you.

THE ONE PEOPLE SKIP

two weeks of weepy and overwhelmed is common and usually lifts. what isn't that: it doesn't lift, it gets heavier, it's past two weeks, you can't sleep even when the baby is asleep, you feel nothing where feeling should be, or you're having thoughts that scare you. that's a complication of birth, same as anything else on this page, and it's treatable.

- **national maternal mental health hotline — 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)**. free, 24/7, english and spanish. call or text. you don't have to be at a crisis point.
- **988** — suicide & crisis lifeline, call or text, if you're in immediate danger.

i'm not a doctor. i own a cleaning company and i've done this twice, seven years apart. this is the version i wish somebody had handed me at the hospital door — it doesn't replace the person who knows your chart. warning signs list from the CDC's Hear Her campaign; visit timing from ACOG; bleeding stages from Cleveland Clinic.