

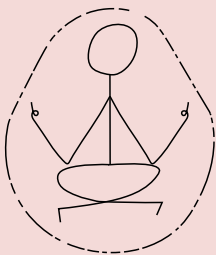
BUMPSTART



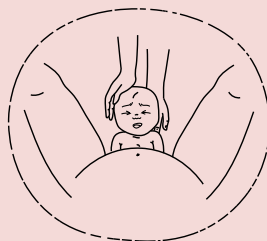
Hey mummy!

Welcome to your BumpStart course...

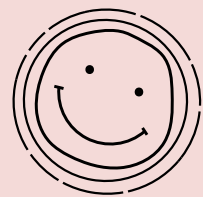
1. Your mental set up for birth



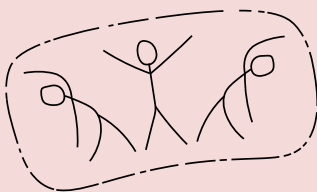
2. Giving birth



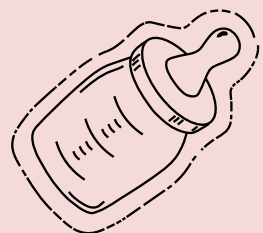
3. What to expect after birth



4. Looking after your wellbeing



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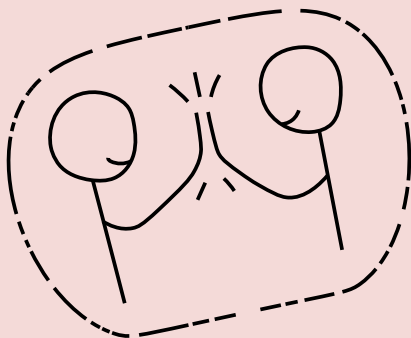
Intro

Despite being pregnant for nine months, nothing really prepares you for the moment a tiny angry squishy human emerges from your body. From that moment on your life, will have changed beyond recognition. You won't want it any other way but sometimes it can feel as if you've been thrown into the deep end blindfolded.

This crash course in what it's really like to become a new mum will help lift that blindfold so there's less being 'thrown in' and more of a stylish 'dive in'. Ok, so we might not be great at metaphors but we are great at knowing what information will help you enjoy your new adventure as much as possible and leave you feeling confident in your mothering ability. Let's get cracking...

The BumpStart Team X

P.S Don't forget to join The Mummy Social Mates support group on facebook to connect with other mums!



well prepared
confident
clued up

Lesson 1 - Your mental set up for birth

Real life isn't like the movies!

You've had a candle lit, serene birth, humming your way through each contraction while your partner strokes your back and praises your birthing-goddess-ness. You both cry with joy at meeting your beautiful baby for the first time and feel an instant, overwhelming love. Once back at home you're sat on the sofa looking glowing (like the new mums do on the adverts) smiling at your new bundle of joy feeling nothing but complete love and peace. Your partner gazes at you, amazed by your feat of creating a whole new person, showering you with affection and care. Appreciation and love are all that surround you now that you are a mum.

Or...

Your birth plan goes to sh*t and while screaming at your midwives "give me all the drugs you've got!" you need every medical intervention going and your partner passes out at the sight. Finally, you meet your baby for the first time but hang on, where is that overwhelming explosion of love you were promised? All you're feeling is a grave concern for the state of your 'downstairs'. Your partner is back in the room but annoyingly keeps jabbering on about how awful that was for *them*. Back home you feel like you've been hit by a bus. You're sweaty, you're bleeding, you look all puffy with a still huge, jelly-like belly. You can only waddle due to some recently obtained piles and you're not sure why but you can't stop crying. Surely this isn't right? Surely I should be happier than I have ever been! What is wrong with me?

NOTHING! Absolutely nothing.

Like a lot in life, becoming a mum is not like staring in your very own rom-com. It's a mix of amazing parts and hard parts, the beautiful and the ugly, it's what being a human is all about. A pitfall that so many new mums fall into is finding their expectations don't live up to reality, and they can find this hard to swallow. Perhaps it feels as if they aren't enjoying each day as much as they should be, as if they aren't treasuring it enough, as if they aren't doing a good job or like they are the only one who isn't 'getting it right'. And this, categorically, is **not true**.

Every mum out there who is taking care of her baby, feeding her baby, clothing her baby, soothing her baby and cuddling her baby, is doing an amazing job, even if her life doesn't look like a movie or a perfect instagram snap.

Remember...

- ☺ **Embrace** the ordinary days.
- ☺ Ride out the harder days with **kindness to yourself**.
- ☺ **Appreciate everything you have**, even the small stuff.
- ☺ **Don't compare** yourself to anyone else - especially on social media!
- ☺ Know your baby **wouldn't want anyone else as their mum**.
- ☺ Appreciate that being a mum **isn't easy**.
- ☺ Know that **your life is wonderful** just the way it is.

Remember that for everyone, there are ordinary days, hard days and fabulous days.

Your birthing mindset

No matter how many people you talk to or books you read, how your birth pans out is ultimately out of your control. You may have a vaginal birth, a planned C-section, an emergency C-section, elective C-section or have medical interventions to help your baby out.

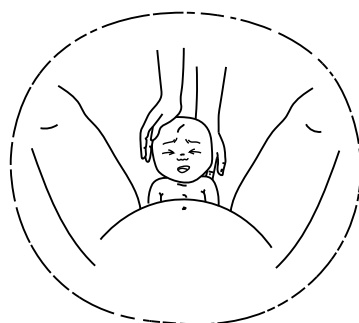
For some woman there seems to be a self-inflicted feeling of 'failure' if they don't have the all-natural birth, complete with Simba-like-lifting-baby-from-own-vagina moment. Remember that old chestnut 'real life isn't like the movies', yup that applies for birth too so take note...

Having no pain relief doesn't make one woman more heroic than the other.

Having a C-section doesn't mean you've copped out.

Needing medical interventions doesn't mean you've failed.

Birth is an unpredictable, and somewhat messy process, and all that matters is that your baby arrives safely - however that may be.



Creating a positive birthing mindset

Before we look at the birthing process we're going to have a look at how we respond mentally to birth. We know that the idea of birthing a human from your vagina, or your tummy being turned into a sun-roof, is a scary prospect. It's natural to feel nervous about childbirth but consider this...

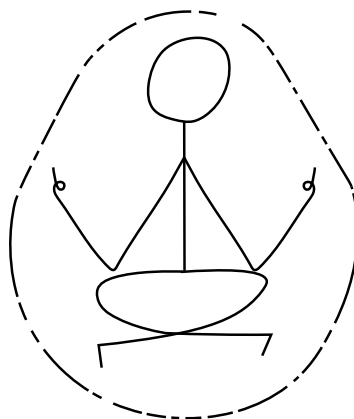
You feel that first contraction and you FREAK OUT! “Oh my god this is going to hurt!!!”. Or it's the day of your C-section and you decide to imagine the impending event with horror-movie like details.

If your mind is allowed to do its own thing, and run wild with negative thoughts, you are not going to be in the best mental space for your birth. Plus, your body will hate you for it as it will become flooded with stress hormones which will make what it's trying to do ten times harder.

Now imagine a different scenario...

Your birth has begun and you are calm, focusing on meeting your baby for the first time and your body is relaxed. Your mind is clear, you're able to focus on what your medical team is telling you and able to manage the situation well, no matter what happens.

You can help yourself to do this by using **breathing techniques, movement, affirmations, visualisation and calming triggers**. Once practised, this can be a very powerful toolkit to help you stay relaxed and calm during your labour or C-section. The aim is to stop your mind going into panic mode so you can stay calm and relaxed.



How to stay calm and focused during labour

Breathing

To calm yourself throughout your birth try a simple breathing technique where you breathe in through your nose, count slowly to four or five, and as you exhale through your mouth, count to the same number again. If it helps you, try counting backwards in countdown fashion while you exhale. Counted breathing helps you focus and will encourage you to take long, slow breaths which will calm your mind and body.

Controlled breathing during each contraction is one of the most powerful things you can do.

Movement

Moving our bodies is a great way to focus and distract all at the same time. Swaying and rocking during labour and especially contractions is a great way to distract from any overwhelming feelings and gives the mind something to focus on. It can also help relax your muscles. Also remember that for a vaginal birth gravity is your friend. If possible, DO NOT lie on your back. Lying on your back for birthing goes against how our bodies have been designed to give birth and instead of opening up the pelvis, it actually puts the pelvis in an awkward position for getting baby out. As much as you can keep up some sort of gentle movement and stay upright.

Birthing on backs only became common practice due to a king wanting to see his children being born (insert eye roll!).

Affirmations

This may sound a bit woo-woo, but affirmations are a well-used tool to trick the mind into believing something you really want to be true. Even super successful people at the top of their game use this trick- to calm nerves before going onto a stage to perform or to increase confidence before going into a business negotiation. It's just the same as telling yourself 'I can do this' before you do something you're finding scary. All you need to do is choose a phrase and repeat it frequently, soon you'll have repeated it so much that your brain will believe it. For birth this could be "I am calm"- "I am safe"- "My body can do this" - "I am letting my baby be born"- "My baby and I can do this". When in labour repeat this phrase to yourself.

Visualization

Another slightly woo-woo one but give it a chance as it's an incredibly powerful relaxation tool. Visualisation is where you create an image or a story in your mind that you will replay when you're in labour. Some people choose to visualise a peaceful location that makes them feel calm and relaxed- think gentle waves lapping at a tropical beach. Some choose to visualise the birthing process- your body opening up and pushing down to bring the baby out.

Some choose to pair the physical process with a visualisation such as a flower opening up for each contraction or each contraction being pictured as a wave moving through them.

The key to making this work is to find what feels natural to you and to practise it regularly in the lead up to birth. Time to get your imagination into action!

Calming triggers

We can all appreciate how music can instantly change our mood or how a scent suddenly triggers a memory. In this scenario we want you to create some triggers that will help you feel calm during labour. Try creating a birthing playlist, finding a fragrance that you find relaxing, and consider if a blanket or dressing gown would make you feel cosy. What else would work for you?

Practice makes perfect so everyday take a few minutes to practice your breathing, play through your visualisation and say your affirmations while using your calming triggers. When you go into labour this box of tricks will empower you!

Hypnobirthing courses

Hypnobirthing has seen a huge growth in popularity over the past few years with women using it to empower themselves with tools and techniques to handle anything that crosses their path on their birthing day. Hypnobirthing provides tools and strategies to help you achieve this, as well as ways to reduce any anxiety or fear you may experience. The aim is to reduce the body's 'fight or flight' response, this keeps cortisol levels low (the body's stress hormone), and enables the body's endorphins to act as natural pain relief and for you to stay calm and relaxed. Have a look for courses near you or online options. It'll be money and time well spent!

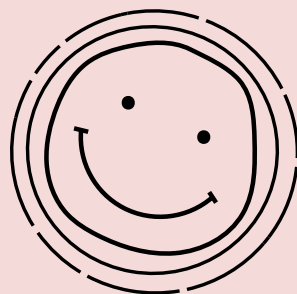
Post traumatic stress

There is a small percentage of births that leave mums and dads feeling more shell shocked than one would like. Perhaps things took a scary turn and the experience of this has caused distress that some find unmanageable. It's worth knowing the signs for post-traumatic stress disorder, or birth trauma so that you can get professional help if you or your partner are struggling.

The common signs and symptoms:

- Re-living aspects of the trauma, for example, having vivid flashbacks (feeling that the trauma is happening all over again).
- Being easily upset or angry.
- Extreme alertness or on-edginess.
- Disturbed sleep or a lack of sleep.
- Self-destructive behaviour or being reckless.
- Feeling detached, cut off and emotionally numb.
- Being unable to express affection.
- Using alcohol or drugs to avoid memories.

If you see yourself or your partner expressing any of the above, or anything you or someone else sees as worrying (often it's easier to spot these things from the outside) please, please call your GP and ask for help.



Lesson 2 - Giving birth

Lesson 2 tells you everything you need to know about giving birth. Use the Birthing Notes page as you work through the content and have a look at the Birthing Checklist to help you get everything ready. Let's go!

Where to give birth

The stories about babies being born in the back seat of the car or on the sitting room floor are true, but unless you get an all-mighty surprise you generally have three options of where you can have your baby. A birthing unit, the hospital or at home. (Please do speak to your midwife who will be more than happy to discuss your options with you as they differ from area to area and depend on your individual circumstances.)

Birthing unit

Generally, the most popular option is to go to a birthing unit. These are normally near to the hospital but are units just for pregnant ladies which have been designed to replicate the home environment as much as possible. In a way, they give you the best of both worlds- feeling homely but with easy access to hospital support if you should need it. Think low lighting, water birth options, comfy beds and multiple midwives at hand. Plus, any medical assistance you may need will be at hand.

Hospital

For some, a hospital birth is the only option available to them perhaps due to health reasons. The benefits of having a hospital birth are that you can have all the drugs on offer should you need them!

Homebirth

Home births are generally more popular with second time mums who have experienced giving birth before but some first-time mums also choose these if they are considered low risk. Homebirths are lovely, as stating the obvious, you have all of your home comforts- there really is no place like home! You can hire water pools so you can have a water birth, and will have the undivided attention of a dedicated midwife. This means they will be able to quickly spot if you need to go to hospital at any point during labour.

Where you decide to give birth is important and something that needs prior considering so you can make a plan of action for the big event!

Signs labour has begun

Oh sh*t this is really happening! Hell yeah lady, let's do this...

The early part of labour is where your body starts to get ready to birth your baby. To birth a baby your cervix, which is where your vagina meets the womb, needs to be around 10cm wide, which is just about enough room (with some serious pushing from you) for baby to get through. During this first part of labour, your cervix starts to soften and open (dilate is the proper term). It's understandable that when you near your due date every little twinge makes you think THIS IS IT! So, here's our guide to knowing when this process has started and you are officially in labour!

Contractions

One of the most common indicators that labour is starting is contractions. These are the tightening and relaxing of the womb and start off feeling like period pains or backache, which comes and goes like waves. With each contraction, your muscles are pulling your cervix open, bit by bit, and when the time is right will also be pushing your baby downwards. You need to time your contractions (there are apps to help you do this) as they are an indicator of how close baby is to being born and also indicate when you need to go into hospital or have your midwife present if you are having a home birth. At the start, contractions are perfectly manageable for most, but as the labour progresses they become more and more intense which requires you to focus and concentrate on helping yourself through each one.

The show

For some, the first sign that labour is on its way is 'the show', which is when your mucus plug comes out. It's as delightful as it sounds and looks just like you might imagine... a mass of mucus-yuckiness appearing in your knickers. We'll move swiftly on...

The clear-out

You may also experience 'a clear-out' (we know, it's all a bit TMI) which is caused by the baby's head pushing down on the bowel and literally clearing you out. Whilst it is completely natural to poo a little during birth (yes the rumours are true), this is your body's way of getting rid of some of it beforehand to make more room for baby.

Your waters breaking

Your waters (this is the fluid currently surrounding your baby) may break, this can be a gush or a trickle but will continue to leak. It isn't always like the movies where there's a waterfall. It is often thought that once the initial 'break' has happened that's it, however, that is not the case and the fluid will continue to leak out. It feels warm, just like you've wet yourself (we've all done that at some point right?) and it has a funny smell too, so you will know you're not just wetting yourself. It's advisable to shove on a maternity pad at this point.

Contacting your midwife

The NHS advises that you contact your midwife when you are having 3 contractions, each lasting around 60 seconds, in every 10 minutes, or if your waters have already broken. There are plenty of apps out there which allow you to monitor contractions so you can get your timings spot-on, these are also great to distract yourself with! It goes without saying that if you are concerned about anything then you should contact them *immediately*.

When labour doesn't start

Sometimes the baby is too cosy and needs some intervention to come out, this could be because you've gone too far past your due date or due to health reasons. This will usually start with what is known as a 'cervical sweep'. This is a procedure where the midwife will insert her finger into your vagina and making sweeping movements to separate the membrane that surrounds your baby from your cervix. This procedure shouldn't hurt, however, it is somewhat uncomfortable. Sometimes a repeat procedure is offered if things do not progress.

Induction

If the sweep is unsuccessful then this may lead to being **induced** (please don't be alarmed by this, it is fairly common with one in five labours being induced). This may include having a pessary inserted into your vagina which will soften the cervix. This process will be used to try and kick-start your contractions but will sometimes require further intervention such as breaking your waters manually.



Birthng your baby

Giving birth is a huge physical feat which requires help in the form of midwives and other medical professionals. They are all there to help you deliver your baby.

The best thing you can do is stay calm, listen to your midwives, trust your instincts about what is happening to your body, and know that you can do it.

As your labour progresses contractions will get closer and closer together, and more and more intense. With each one your baby is being pushed down the birthing canal towards the entrance of your vagina and your cervix is opening to that golden 10cms (fully dilated).

Everyone has different lengths of labours. For some, mild contractions start days before the baby is born, for others the entire process might only last 2 hours, but on average first-time births are usually between 6-12 hours.

Eventually, your baby will be so far down that you'll feel intense pressure and feel the urge to push. At this point, for many, this leads them to yell "I can't do this anymore!" if you hear yourself saying this, know that this is an amazing sign and means you are nearly there! For some this intense pressure also feels like you need a very large poo leading many to believe that babies actually come out of our bottoms (true story).

If you suspect there is a cow or some other animal in your birthing room- there isn't, that's just you. Oh yes, get ready to hear some primitive birthing noises as you let out your inner animal. You may like to prepare your birthing partner for this one too- imagine roars and moos from some place deep inside that you didn't even know was there!

Pooing yourself (oh yeah, that's a heading!)

We're afraid the rumours are true! Pooing whilst birthing is very common and unavoidable (you really do lose all dignity during birth- the process is totally un-glamorous). The muscles you use to push the baby out are the same ones you use when you poo, so there's no getting around it. A lot of the time it goes unnoticed by you (and thankfully your birthing partner) and the midwife does an amazing job of clearing it up quickly and efficiently.

Crowning (you deserve a crown after giving birth FYI)

When the baby is about to come out, it is very important to closely follow the directions from your midwife. As your baby is about to crown (be at the entrance of the vagina), she will ask you to pause and encourage you to breathe slowly. The reason for this pause is to ensure that the skin and muscles in the perineum (the area between the vagina and anus) have time to stretch, instead of tearing.

Sometimes your midwife might suggest an episiotomy, which is when they make a small cut in the perineum to avoid tearing. You will be given a local anaesthetic to numb the area before the incision is made. After your baby is born any tears or cuts will be stitched up.

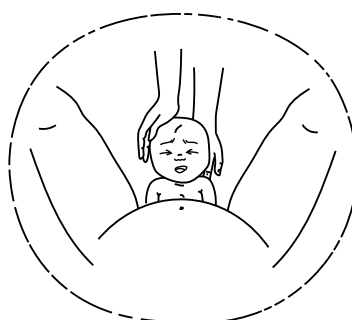
Once the baby's head is out, the rest of the body will usually follow in the next couple of contractions. Enjoy the completely unreal feeling as the last part slides out! Your baby will still be attached, via the cord, to the placenta which will still be inside you. Once the blood has stopped being pumped through the cord, the cord will be cut (often a task executed by your birthing partner- about time they did something useful).

You will get to hold your baby as soon as possible after birth, and experience your first skin-to-skin contact with them. **This will honestly be one of the greatest moments of your life!**

Delivering the placenta

Whilst the hard part is over, there is still one more thing to do- deliver the placenta. There are two ways to do this. The first is to be given an injection of Oxytocin into your thigh which makes the womb contract and the midwife will usually pull the cord which is attached to the placenta and this will come out through your vagina... an extremely odd sensation and quite the thing to see once it's out if you fancy it! Or you can wait for your body to do its own thing and birth the placenta without intervention. Your midwife will usually have a conversation with you and help you make any decisions regarding which option is best for you.

After birth, your baby is likely to get a vitamin K injection.



Slow labours

On some occasions, labour can progress slower than expected, when this occurs (depending on the stage of labour you are in) there are usually two options:

1. If your waters haven't already broken, they may manually do this. This is known as artificial rupture of membrane (ARM). This is usually done by the midwife who will make a small break in the membrane. This is usually done by a long thin probe (amnihook) or a medical glove with a pricked end at the end of the finger (amnicot). This just feels like an internal examination.
2. Putting you on an Oxytocin drip to speed things up.

During labour it is important that you find positions that are most comfortable for you. Some tried and tested positions (this sounds familiar doesn't it?) are sitting, lying on your side, kneeling on all fours, standing or even squatting. Remember, gravity is your friend.

Assisted deliveries

Sometimes things do not progress as expected and you need help to deliver the baby (the baby may be in an awkward position or showing signs they aren't happy, or you become too exhausted).

Help usually comes in the form of **forceps** (think large salad servers) or a ventouse suction cup (think of a loo plunger- it just keeps getting more glamorous hey?!). Both are safe methods and your midwife will be very experienced in using them, with around one in eight births requiring extra help. You'll likely be given a local anaesthetic to numb your vagina and perineum first. The forceps are smooth, metal spoon-like tongs. They are curved so that they can easily fit around the baby's head and with a contraction, your midwife will help the baby come out by gently pulling as you push.

During the **ventouse** procedure, a suction cup is attached to the baby's head. As with forceps, this works with your body and when you have a contraction your midwife will help pull the baby out. Your baby may have marks on the top of their head or side of their face which will usually fade and disappear after 48 hours. Occasionally small cuts or bruises may be present at birth if instrumental assistance is used. These are usually harmless and will fade over time.

Safe arrival of baby is all that matters!

Pain relief

We aren't going to lie, labour doesn't feel exactly like getting a massage (by this we mean it feels NOTHING like getting a massage - we all know how big a baby's head is and how big our lady parts are), but there are plenty of ways to ease the experience for you.

Self-help

The best place to start is to consider how you are currently training yourself to react to labour, as we worked through in Lesson 2. This will give you the best chance to manage your labour as naturally as possible for as long as you want to, even if this is just until you walk through the hospital doors. By staying calm you'll be able to ask the questions and listen to the advice of the midwife when it comes to making decisions about pain relief. Some women decide from the outset that they will be saying no to all the drugs... if this is you please remember you are allowed to change your mind at any point during the process! So if you find yourself asking for all the drugs on offer, that's cool.

Water birth

Being submerged in water during labour can help relax and ease your contractions. The water is kept at a comfortable temperature of 37.5 C and for most women, it's the preferred method of birth if they are able to have one. Just think of how relaxing getting into a warm bath is, the sensation of water on your body is a lovely way to distract and help relax your muscles.

TENS machines

This stands for Transcutaneous Electric Nerve Stimulation. Some hospitals have these available (you'll need to enquire), if not you can purchase or hire your own. These machines tend to be most effective early on in labour. Electrodes are taped to your back and connected by wires to a small battery-powered stimulator. You control this through a hand-held device in which you can give yourself small but safe amounts of current through the attached electrodes. This is thought to stimulate the body into producing its own natural painkiller, which are called endorphins.

There are no medals for being heroic!

Gas and air (entonox)

This is a mixture of oxygen and nitrous oxide gas, which most women have during birth. It can be inhaled through a mouthpiece as you feel necessary as you have control of this handheld device. It won't relieve all the pain but it does take the edge off and is the most commonly used form of pain relief. It is important to remember that you should breathe it in slowly and deeply as it takes 15-20 seconds to work. This doesn't harm your baby but may make you feel light-headed (perhaps the feeling of being tipsy- see it's not all bad!). It can also make some people feel sleepy or sick but you can stop using this at any point.

Pethidine

This is an injection given in your thigh or buttock which contains pethidine. Sometimes, less commonly, a drug called Diamorphine is given. It can take 20 minutes for the injection to work and can last anywhere from two to four hours. Therefore, if you are too close to the 'pushing' stage you may be too late for this option. Again this can make some women feel sick or light-headed.

Epidural

This is a local anaesthetic which numbs the nerves that carry the pain impulses from the birth canal to the brain. This is done via a needle which is inserted into the base of your back. A very thin tube will then be passed through the needle into the back, close to the nerves that are carrying the pain signals. It can take around 10 minutes to set up an epidural and then a further 10-15 minutes for it to work. An anaesthetist is responsible for administering the epidural. There are some different variations of epidurals available at some hospitals/units, some allow you to still move around so it is important to discuss these options with your midwife beforehand. The side effects of an epidural can be heavy-feeling legs but apart from that, it should stop all sensations of giving birth. It can prolong the pushing part of labour due to the fact you may no longer feel your contractions and the midwife will have to inform you when to push.

Your decisions around pain relief will likely be an 'in the moment decision', led by how your labour progresses and with the advice of your midwife, who will be responding to the situation and how you and baby are doing.

C-sections

C-sections are effectively when your belly is made into a sun roof for baby to be lifted out from.

We'll start by saying this is *not* an easy option. We know that the thought of your vagina being left untouched by a baby's head sounds appealing but a C-section is major surgery, despite some people making ridiculous comments about it being the 'easy way out'! Around one in four babies are born this way and they are either planned or emergency. You'll have a planned C-section if there are any health complications, sometimes if you are an older mum, or if the baby is breech (the wrong way up). Second time mums sometimes have C-sections if their first birth didn't go too well. An emergency C-section happens if your labour doesn't go as desired and there is deemed to be a risk to you or the baby. Your midwife will be closely monitoring both you and the baby throughout your labour so will know if there's a problem.

Planned c-sections

If you have a planned C-section you will be given a date in advanced along with a pre-assessment appointment to discuss the procedure, along with a blood test. You may also be given a course of medication to take such as antibiotics, anti-sickness and antacids. You'll also need to sign a consent form and as with any operation, you'll need to stop eating and drinking a few hours in advance of your procedure.



The procedure

Unless it's an emergency, you will be given an epidural anaesthetic into the spine which means you can remain awake but won't be able to feel the lower part of your body so you will not feel any pain. You will probably feel a pulling or tugging sensation as the doctors bring the baby out. A screen will be placed across your body so you can't see what is happening, although your midwife/doctors will keep you informed. You will also have a catheter inserted into your bladder.

When everything is ready an incision is made just above your bikini line, usually between 10 – 20 cms wide, this will allow access into your womb and your baby will be delivered through this opening, which usually only takes between 5 – 10 minutes! As long as there hasn't been any complications, and you and your baby are in good health, then you will be able to see your baby immediately after they are born. Amazing stuff right?!

Once the baby is out there are some things that need sorting out. First, you will be given an injection of oxytocin to encourage the womb to contract and reduce blood loss. Then everything will be stitched back up, there's a lot of layers to be stitched so the entire operation usually takes between 40 – 50 minutes. Afterwards, you will be sore and find it hard to sit up and lift things- it's surprising to find out just how much you use your stomach muscles for everyday movements! You will be well looked after however and offered painkillers, have the catheter removed around 12- 18 hours afterwards once you are able to walk around. Just like a vaginal birth, you will bleed for a few weeks afterwards.

Emergency c-sections

Depending on the situation if time is of the essence you may be given a general anaesthetic so will be unconscious for the procedure. The need for an emergency C-section will require quick intervention which can be an overwhelming experience, it's not ideal but trust that the medical teams have done this many times before and trust in their skill. The only thing that matters is you and baby are safe.

When babies need some extra TLC

Sometimes babies need a little extra support and assistance when they are born and will need to spend some extra time in hospital. This may be in a special care baby unit, a local neonatal unit or an intensive care unit.

Special care baby unit (SCBU, sometimes called low dependency)

This is for babies who tend to be born after 32 weeks' gestation and do not need intensive care. Here the medical team will be:

- ☛ Monitoring their breathing or heart rate.
- ☛ Giving them more oxygen.
- ☛ Treating low body temperature.
- ☛ Treating low blood sugar.
- ☛ Helping them feed, sometimes by using a tube.
- ☛ Helping babies who become unwell soon after birth.

Local neonatal unit (LNU)

This is for babies born between 28 and 32 weeks' gestation who need a higher level of medical care. Here the following support may be given.

- ☛ Breathing support is given through their windpipe (called ventilation).
- ☛ Short-term intensive care.
- ☛ Care during short periods where they stop breathing (called apnoea).
- ☛ Continuous positive airway pressure (called CPAP) or high flow therapy for breathing support.
- ☛ Feeding through a drip in their vein (called parenteral nutrition).
- ☛ Cooling treatment for babies who have had difficult births or are unwell soon after birth (before being transferred to a neonatal intensive care unit – see below).
- ☛ Helping babies who become unwell soon after birth.

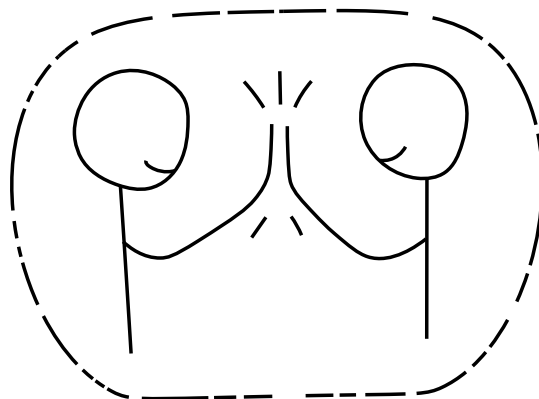
Neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)

This is the level of care for babies with the highest need for support. Often these babies will have been born before 28 weeks gestation, or be very unwell after birth. For example:

- Need breathing support given through their windpipe (called ventilation).
- Have severe disease affecting their breathing (called respiratory disease).
- Need or have just had surgery.

We understand that being in the situation where your baby requires any of the above can be a worrying and emotional time. The best thing you can do is to trust your team, know that they are highly skilled in their work and you really are in the best hands. Ask for the support you need from friends and family- say yes to any support offered- and you may like to reach out to other families who have been through the same experience.

Does being induced, having a C-section or everything happening as nature intended reflect anything about you as a mother or as an individual? Nope, not all.



Top tips from other mums

We asked some mums to share with you their top tips for labour and here they are...

Top 10 items to go in your hospital bag

- ☛ Comfy loose-fitting clothes.
- ☛ Lip balm.
- ☛ High energy snacks (don't forget some for your birthing partner).
- ☛ Drinks, bottled water and straws.
- ☛ Flip flops – for moving around and for the shower afterwards.
- ☛ Phone charger.
- ☛ Maternity pads and big pants.
- ☛ Fan, face spritz, flannel – things to keep you cool.
- ☛ Witch hazel (to soak into your pads) and arnica tablets (to reduce bruising).
- ☛ Music, podcast, headphones or a book, magazine (to pass the time).



Top ten pieces of advice for women soon to give birth

- ☛ Trust your instincts and your body.
- ☛ Take baby clothes in a range of sizes. Even if you have been told to expect a 'big baby'.
- ☛ Don't be afraid to ask for pain relief.
- ☛ Every birth is different – embrace yours.
- ☛ Focus on your breathing especially during contractions.
- ☛ Surround yourself with positive vibes.
- ☛ Ask questions.
- ☛ Things don't always go to plan – this isn't your fault.
- ☛ You can do this – remember that!
- ☛ Educate yourself – know your options and familiarise yourself with all scenarios.

10 things mums wished they'd been told before labour

- ☹ It doesn't always go the way you plan, that's ok. The safe arrival of the baby and your health are the most important things. Whatever happens, you are not a failure.
- ☹ Your body knows what to do, trust it!
- ☹ From start to finish it's overwhelming – you are bringing new life into the world. How awesome are you!?
- ☹ Don't be a hero! You aren't going to get any medals. If you need to pain relief, take it! If you leave it too late, it won't be as effective.
- ☹ Educate yourself – as they say, knowledge is power but don't worry if your midwives don't even look at your birthing plan!
- ☹ Don't listen to horror stories – everyone's experience is different.
- ☹ Some women experience afterpains and sickness. Be prepared just in case.
- ☹ If you have a hospital birth there are photographers that come around from a company called Bounty. You say no to them if you don't want this service!
- ☹ It's ok if you don't instantly feel a rush of love – you aren't abnormal, in fact, it can be quite common. Remember you have just been through an awful lot.
- ☹ Your body will ache, it's called labour for a reason.

How your birth goes is out of your control. It's no representation of your efforts. Listen to the advice of your midwife. Know that nothing about giving birth is like you see in the movies - it's messy and un-glamorous.

Remember, this is just the beginning - don't expect it to be perfect, the perfect moments will come!

Lesson 3 - What to expect after birth

You've done it, you've given birth! Now what?

Now you need to sit on your sofa, binge watch Netflix, eat your favourite food, take naps and revel in the deliciousness of newborn baby cuddles.

The first few weeks after your baby arrives are precious- you do not need to be doing anything else other than looking after yourself and your baby.

This includes:

- ☞ Having your second-cousin-twice-removed, who you haven't seen in years, over for a visit.
- ☞ Letting Betty from down the road in for a cuddle.
- ☞ Getting dressed in anything other than pyjamas.
- ☞ Cleaning your house.
- ☞ Going out for a 'fun family day'.

No, no, no! For the first couple of weeks, all you need to be doing is following this golden rule; one week in bed and one week on the sofa. Although you may mix up the bed/sofa ratio.

Giving birth is a huge feat, both physically and mentally.

Too often new mums find themselves feeling that they should be getting up and about and having their entire phone book over for a visit. And all too often mums look back at these early days and really regret doing this.

The absolute best thing you can do is to go into hibernation with your immediate love ones. Spend the days in your comfiest PJs, under your cosiest blankets, watching all your favourite movies and eating your favourite food. Have as many cuddles as you possibly can fit in. Have as many naps as you need. Your body needs to heal and your mind needs to be present. You need to put you as number one. And if visitors come over 2 weeks later your baby will still look just as tiny and cute as they did to you on day one, we promise!

The gory details...*

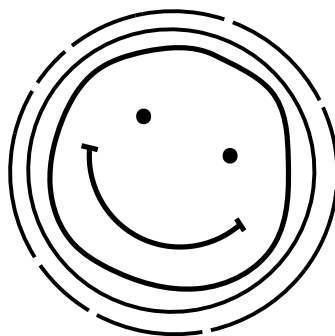
*insert evil laugh

No, we're just kidding! Although, this section may make you squirm, it will mean that when these things happen to you it won't be such a shock. You can stay cool, calm and collected instead of getting your giant post-birth knickers in a twist!

What will I feel like after I've given birth?

Generally, like you've been hit by a truck; knackered and pretty tender. However, this will **pale in comparison** to how much of a damn super-hero you will feel and how amazing it will be having your baby in your arms!

No matter how you gave birth, the first six weeks afterwards are considered a “recovery” period. Even if you sailed through your pregnancy and had the easiest delivery on record (and especially if you didn't), your body has been stretched and stressed to the max, and it will need time to heal. Everyone is different so everyone will recover at a different rate with different experiences. For the majority, issues such as sore nipples (sorry!), backaches and soreness down below will ease pretty quickly but for others, it may continue for weeks. Often we are so focused on giving birth that we don't consider what happens afterwards so next we're going to tell you some useful things to know.

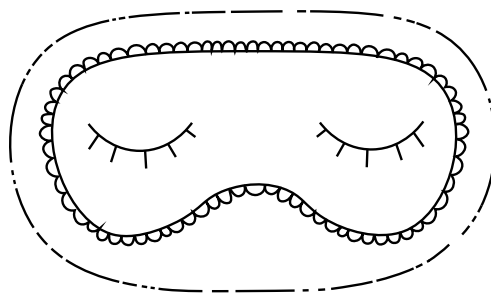


Soreness

If you've just pushed a tiny human out of your foo-foo, it's unsurprising that will lead to some soreness down there, which can last anywhere from 3 weeks if you didn't tear to 6 or more weeks if you had a tear or an episiotomy. Tears and episiotomies (which is a small cut to give the baby more room to come out) happen to the perineum. It's likely that you've never given your perineum much thought up to now, perhaps you didn't even know it had a name (it's the piece of skin between the vagina and anus FYI). But now my friend, is it's time to shine!

Argh, we know! The idea of tearing or stitches down there doesn't sound great but they are very common and you will recover. Once the baby is out the midwife will see if you need any stitches and these will dissolve over time. Sometimes you may have a check-up with a midwife to make sure you are healing well. If you delivered by C-section, expect to spend the first three to four days after in the hospital recovering; it will take four to six weeks before you're feeling back to normal. A C-section isn't an easy way out, it's major surgery! So obviously there will be soreness around the incision and it will take a while for your stomach muscles to be of any use again. Don't be surprised if sitting up is suddenly impossible and you need to adopt a roll and flop strategy to get out of bed. However your birth went, in general, most new mums feel very tired and a bit like they've been in a fight after having a baby.

Your body has just accomplished something incredible, something very testing which is why it is now time to rest.



After pains and bleeding

I've given birth and I'm still getting contractions... whaaattt?

Yes, afraid so. Your uterus (womb) has just grown to the size required to house your baby and now it needs to get back to its normal size by contracting, yes more contractions! But don't worry, these 'after pains' which last 4 to 7 days, aren't the full blown contractions of labour and feel more like period pains. The best thing you can do to soothe this is to have a hot water bottle placed on your stomach (remember to take one to bed with you) and pain killers help too.

And there's so much blood... whaaattt?

However you give birth you will bleed for some time after. This starts off very heavy and requires serious intervention, sanitary towels and tampons are a no-go in this scenario! What you need are maternity pads or incontinence pads, or better yet incontinence pants (yes pants). The bleeding comes in waves and you'll often feel a whoosh of blood when you stand up or while breastfeeding. Bleeding is heavy for the first 3 to 10 days and then eases off, lasting for around 6 weeks but it will be very light by that time.

If you spot large clots or you're bleeding through more than one pad every hour, call your midwife or doctor right away to rule out a postpartum haemorrhage.

And while we're here we bet you're wondering if your vagina will ever be the same after birth?

Not exactly, although it will be very close, it is designed to stretch and then go back and for most, partners can't tell any difference either.



Boobs, tums and the sweats

Let's start with your boobs...

Although producing milk for your baby is what your boobs are designed to do, it can be a very odd experience to start with. Over the first few days you'll have very little milk (although the perfect amount for your baby) but then one morning you'll wake up looking like you've had a boob job (hello boys!! Partners do not attempt to touch). Your boobs will also leak and spray milk at inappropriate times... all the glamour hey! You need to buy some comfortable bras designed for new mums and breastfeeding pads which sit in your bra to catch the leaks. As strange as it may all feel to start with, you will soon get used to it and will find a whole new appreciation for those boobs of yours! Be warned you will likely leak at the sound of a baby crying, any baby that is, and also whilst trying to relax in a nice warm bath. And if your boobs are uncovered the spray of milk can reach a surprising distance! When your milk comes in, your boobs will feel rock hard and hot to touch, don't panic it they will chill out soon! Did you also know that your nipples have lots of tiny holes in them for the milk to come out of? Mind-blowing huh? Another random fact is many mums stock up on cabbages, as the leaves (straight from the fridge) put over your boobs- think a sexy green cabbagey bra- can ease sore boobs.

And now your tummy...

It comes as a shock to some that after giving birth you will still look pregnant! Part of the reason is your still-expanded uterus, which takes about six weeks to shrink back down to its pre-pregnancy size. There are also excess leftover fluids, which will be flushed out in the coming days — not to mention the fact that your abdominal muscles and skin have been stretched out big-time and you've stored some extra fat to nurture your baby during pregnancy. Basically, for a while after birth, your tummy will feel and look like a deflated balloon, very squishy and kind of empty!

And now the sweating...

If you find yourself randomly sweating like you've just run a marathon this will be 'postpartum sweating'. This is normal and due to pregnancy hormones instructing your body to rid itself of all those extra fluids it formerly used to nourish your baby. It tends to happen more often when you're sleeping, aka night sweats. All you can do is grab a towel and try not to sweat about it (sorry, terrible joke there.)

Recovery tips

- ☞ **Ease aches and pains.** Pain killers and hot water bottles work magic to keep you comfortable to ease any aches and pains.
- ☞ **Weeing post-birth** can cause stinging issues so try pouring warm water over yourself (just the parts that need it, not head to toe) while weeing. Use flush-able wet wipes instead of toilet paper as they are more soothing on delicate areas. Also, lean forward (think touching your toes) as much as possible.
- ☞ **Post-birth-poo-trauma (yes it's a real thing)**... try placing a sanitary pad over your vagina while having a poo.
- ☞ **Stock up on pile cream** as they are a common, and painful side effect of all that pushing. If your perineum is feeling worse for wear you can try regularly placing ice on the area too.
- ☞ Gently clean your **C-section incision** with soap and water once a day. Dry with a clean towel, then apply antibiotic ointment. Talk to your doctor about whether it's better to cover the wound or leave it open to air out. Avoid carrying most things (besides your baby), and hold off on vigorous exercise until you get the OK from your doctor.
- ☞ **Work that vagina.** There's no better way to get your vagina back in shape, no matter how you delivered. So get started with Kegel exercises as soon as you're comfortably able.
- ☞ **Be kind to your breasts.** For achy breasts, try using a warm compress or ice packs and gentle massage. Also, be sure to wear a comfortable nursing bra. If you're breastfeeding, let your breasts air out after every nursing session and apply a lanolin cream to prevent sore nipples. Cold cabbages leaves can offer relief too (on your breasts obviously).
- ☞ **Eat well to ease fatigue and fight constipation.** Eat a combination of complex carbs and protein for energy, plus plenty of fibre (found in fruits, veggies and whole grains) to help prevent haemorrhoids: think whole-wheat toast with peanut butter, veggies with hummus, or yoghurt with a handful of berries. Drink at least eight glasses of water every day. You can also use stool softeners to stay regular- avoid straining as much as you can! It's no good for tears or C-section scars.
- ☞ **Keep moving.** When you are ready, taking short and gentle walks helps physical recovery and boosts mental health.

Your postpartum shopping list

Time to hit up Amazon Prime ladies and make sure you've got everything you need to make your recovery as easy as possible.

- ☞ Pain killers
- ☞ Maternity pads - designed for postpartum bleeding.
- ☞ Ice packs - there are ones designed for your downstairs... who knew?!
- ☞ Breast gel pads- these can be made warm or cold to provide relief for sore boobs.
- ☞ Witch hazel pads or spray- witch hazel helps to ease vaginal and piles pain.
- ☞ Cotton underpants - go for the granny ones, as big as possible. Think Bridget Jones!
- ☞ Nursing bras - invest in a few comfy ones that fit you well.
- ☞ Lanolin cream - works wonders to prevent and treat cracked nipples.
- ☞ Nursing pads- to stop soggy bras.
- ☞ Stool softener- in case you get constipated.
- ☞ Hot water bottle - to help ease aches and pains.
- ☞ Flushable wet wipes - so much gentler than toilet paper.

Hear it from other mums

We asked mums to share with us things they would like a new mum to know about those early days. Here are our favourite:

"It is quite common to feel completely out of your depth in the first few days following the birth. Just remember, you've brought a baby into the world. That is no mean feat. Trust us when we say that no one really knows what they are doing."

"You will likely feel exhausted, achy and there is bound to be tears. There is no need to panic though, everything will be ok."

"This is the start of your journey to becoming a mother. Don't expect to be the finished article straight away – it's a learning process. We aren't all naturals and that's ok."

"Your body will be full of hormones, your emotions all over the place and you may feel totally overwhelmed. This is completely normal! You will have a new found strength that you never knew existed. Your whole world has changed, you may have spent nine months preparing for this, but some bits you just cannot prepare for and emotions are one of them."

"If you are breastfeeding, do not put too much pressure on yourself. Whilst it may have always been your dream it doesn't always come naturally. This is nothing to do with you. Some will take to it straight away, others will persevere and others will not. Please remember that fed is best."

"If you've had a c-section it is important you do not overdo it and push yourself too hard. Your wound will need time to heal."

"If you have a partner, boyfriend, husband, girlfriend, wife you are likely to have mixed feelings towards them over the coming weeks. It's very likely that you will feel resentment, frustration and to be quite frank, probably want to deck them at points. This is all very natural but try not too!"

"It is totally ok to say no to visitors. This is your time with the baby. If you aren't up for visitors, then say no. There really is no need to please people. The baby will still be there, don't feel bullied into giving in. This is your time!"

"You need to look after yourself, that is very important – you cannot run on empty."

"Be vocal in asking for help if you need it. No one expects you to do it all. It really is OK to get help – whether that's accepting home cooked meals, someone to do your shopping, someone to watch the baby whilst you sleep or shower."

"In the first few weeks/months babies are like vampires, they will sleep during the day and party at night! Be prepared to feel exhausted."

Lesson 4 - Looking after your wellbeing

I'm happy, I'm sad, I'm delighted, I'm frustrated... being a mum is like being on a emotional roller coaster.

When you become a mum you may find each day is a roller coaster of emotions. One moment you're loving life and high-fiving yourself at your mothering successes, the next you're fighting with a poonami (google it but not while eating) and crying in frustration at the unfeasible length of time it now takes you to leave the house (this is a mothering truth that we'll explain more about later). The adjustment to motherhood is like no other, never before have you been asked to do a job (so to speak) without any training (apart this course, smart cookie!), for every single hour of the day and night, straight after you've just been through a huge physical challenge such as giving birth, all on very little sleep with crazy hormones thrown in for good measure. So it's no wonder that new mums feel all the feels- both highs and lows.

The thing to remember is that yes everyone who becomes a mum is so very lucky and yes we wouldn't change it for the world, but that doesn't mean we aren't allowed to find it hard now and again.



Baby blues and postnatal depression

The Baby Blues is experienced by most new mums and is caused by your hormones re-adjusting themselves once the baby has arrived- your body no longer needs the pregnancy hormones so out they go, causing slight mayhem on their way. Generally, this happens a few days after your baby is born and as a result, you may feel a bit down, tearful or anxious. These feelings are completely normal and may leave you genuinely distraught because your coffee is cold, or sobbing over your baby's feet because you just can't believe how darn cute they are. The Baby Blues tend to pass within a few days.

Postnatal depression

Postnatal depression is something that affects 1 in 10 mums generally within the first year of giving birth, it can come on suddenly or gradually, and it can affect anyone, even if you have never struggled with your mental health before.

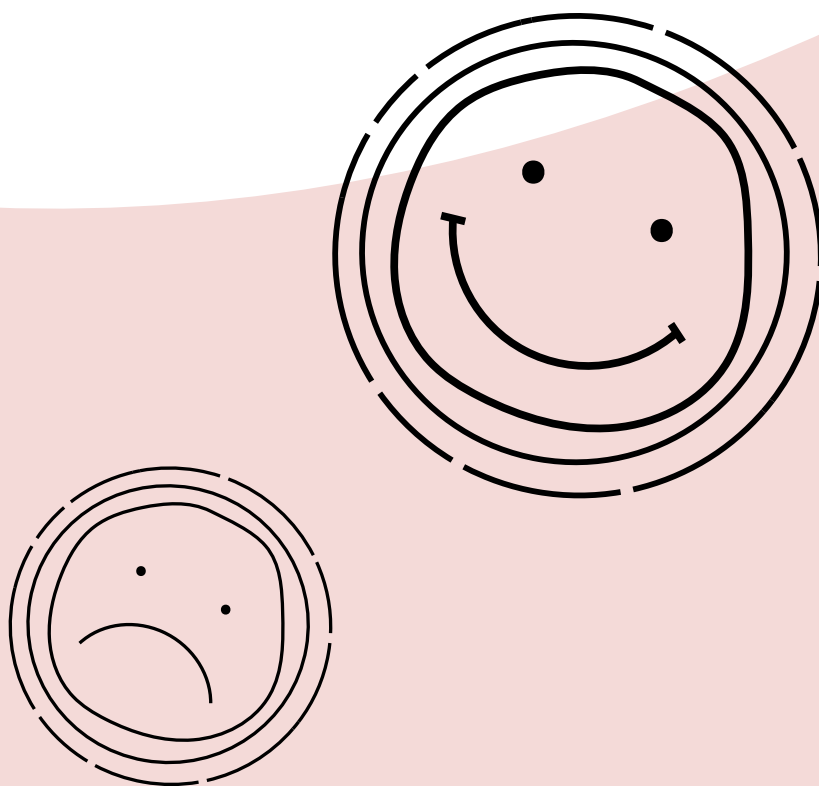
The NHS describes the signs of PND as:

- ☞ A persistent feeling of sadness and low mood.
- ☞ A loss of interest in the world around you and no longer enjoying things that used to give you pleasure.
- ☞ Lack of energy and feeling tired all the time.
- ☞ Trouble sleeping at night and feeling sleepy during the day.
- ☞ Feeling that you're unable to look after your baby.
- ☞ Problems concentrating and making decisions.
- ☞ Loss of appetite or an increased appetite (comfort eating).
- ☞ Feeling agitated, irritable or very apathetic (you "can't be bothered").
- ☞ Feelings of guilt, hopelessness and self-blame.
- ☞ Difficulty bonding with your baby with a feeling of indifference and no sense of enjoyment in their company.
- ☞ Frightening thoughts – for example, about hurting your baby; these can be scary, but they're very rarely acted upon.
- ☞ Thinking about suicide or self-harm.

If you find yourself experiencing any of the above, or you just know something is wrong, you must talk to your GP or health visitor as soon as you can.

There's no need to feel scared or judged, GPs and Health Visitors help new mums with their mental health all the time- you won't be the first or the last mum they help. And the sooner you find professional help, the sooner you can start feeling yourself again.

Regardless of if you experience PND or not, and especially if you do, we want to encourage everyone who takes this course **to talk to others about how they are feeling**. Your friends, your family, your partner and the Mummy Social Mates facebook group are all here to listen, no matter what. Sharing with others is free therapy and it helps an incredible amount, it also encourages others to do the same, in turn helping them.



Want to be a good mum?

Your baby has arrived, your body has achieved an incredible feat and now the most beautiful tiny person is in your arms. Your love for them blossoms, you can happily stare at them for hours, cuddling them is the best thing you've ever done in your whole entire life, and you already can't imagine life without them.

Your life is now completely centred around your baby, and you are more than happy for it to be this way. You'd wake up twenty times a night for the rest of your life for your baby, you'd pace the sitting room floor every evening to help soothe them, you'd make every sacrifice under the sun to ensure they had the absolute best.

That is until you realise how completely and utterly knackered you are. You feel like a zombie, you've forgotten how to have an adult conversation and can't remember the last time you washed your hair or wore something other than joggers. You realise you've been living off cold tea and soggy toast, you haven't done anything other than looking after the baby for yonks and 'me time', well, what the hell's that?

Being a mum isn't a short-term commitment, you're now in this for the long term (and hallelujah for that as it's awesome!). However, when your self-care falls to the bottom of the priority list, over time it's all too easy for mums to be left feeling mentally and physically drained.

So stop right now and take note....

For you to be a good mum, you must look after yourself too! There are no two ways about it; when you realise that *looking after yourself is just as important as looking after your baby, you'll be happier, more confident and more fulfilled*. Your mental health will stay strong, you'll feel physically well and you'll be a happier mum. For your child to thrive, you must too.

Hear it from other mums

"When I was pregnant all people told me was to 'sleep now while I still could' and describe in great detail terrible birthing stories! I read the pregnancy books and knew exactly what fruit my baby was the same size as, and took time researching the best buggies and cots. What I didn't do, and what I wasn't told about, was to consider how my life was about to change and how this might affect me as an individual.

Pre-baby I was working which gave me satisfaction, I was seeing my friends which made me happy, I'd work out as it made me feel good, I'd go shopping for fun and I'd have time to just chill whenever I wanted to. It had never occurred to me how these things that made up my life might alter when I had a baby and more importantly how this might make me feel.

Unsurprisingly, when our son arrived these things slipped away and were replaced with nappy changes, learning how to breastfeed, adjusting to surviving on no sleep, fights with the car seat and tonnes of blissful cuddles on the sofa and baby gazing! We were smitten.

But as the weeks went by I started to have mixed emotions; on one hand, feeling blissfully happy that my world now revolved around my beautiful baby boy, but on the other hand feeling tired, frustrated and overwhelmed.

It was obvious that I needed to make some changes so I started to think about what I needed as an individual. I started prioritising my needs and pretty soon I started to feel better. I can now see that what we should be telling all mums-to-be is that you HAVE to put the effort in to look after yourself as well as your baby." Natalie



My wellbeing action plan

Have the My Wellbeing Action Plan and Wellbeing Checklist from your download pack at the ready before continuing.

To help your wellbeing stay on track we want you to have in place practical plans which will ensure you stay as happy as your new bundle of joy. Even if you've never struggled with your mental health before, the action plan you are going to create in this section is a useful tool to remind yourself of the things you need to do to look after you- at a time when it's all too easy to forget. Once you've read the overview of each area below, fill in your own plan then stick it on your fridge as a daily reminder- see how many sections you can complete each day!

"It was like the penny dropped! If I did these things each day, or as many as I could, I was just a happier person! It was worth paying attention to this and a game changer to my maternity leave." Emma

"Whenever I start to feel a bit down I pay attention to each of these areas and try to do a little something that ticks each category. Within no time I'm feeling more like me again." Lucy

"When I pay attention to these areas over the week, I'm definitely happier, have more energy and can be more present with my baby." Holly

Eating well



Food doesn't just go in one end and out the other. From the moment it enters your system, your body starts attempting to use what you've eaten to give you energy, build your immune system, keep your cells healthy, feed your brain and everything in between... it can even affect your mood! It's true that a slice of cake does wonders for the soul as long as it's balanced with proper nourishment- we're talking about the food that mother nature has given us; wholegrain carbohydrates, good fats, protein and plenty of vegetables and fruit. Not the food produced by some corporation to make them a tonne of cash at the detriment of your health! If you prioritise your health you'll find that it becomes easier and easier to eat properly, and this habit will set a great example for your child. Would now be an ideal time to invest in a new cookbook perhaps?

Getting outdoors and movement



Getting outdoors works wonders for how you feel. It instantly relieves tiredness, eases stress, boosts mood and is a great way to break up the day. Movement is also crucial for our bodies and minds to function well and feel their best- our bodies were designed to move! Our top tip is to combine these two wellbeing requirements by simply going for a walk every day. There is nothing easier and more affordable than putting on your trainers, popping baby in the buggy or carrier and going for a stroll. If you find walking boring, how about listening to some podcasts, or making it into your personal challenge to give it a go? Beat your time next time you do the same route or set yourself a step goal. If you can't get outdoors (thank you British weather) how about going to an exercise class where baby can come too or making the most of all the free online yoga and workout videos so you can still get your body moving.

Feeling mentally engaged



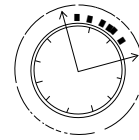
It's very satisfying to do something that mentally stimulates us and not working can leave many of us feeling a little bored and unmotivated! You'll feel more fulfilled and therefore happier if you can fit something into your days that mentally engages you. How about something simple such as reading books, listening to audiobooks and podcasts or watching a TV series that cover topics that interests you?

Getting social



Social interaction is easily lost when we stop working and fall out of step with our pre-baby social circle. Being social is vital to your wellbeing, as humans we simply need this. When you become a mum you may well find you need a new social circle to spend your days with. How can you make some new mum friends or who do you know who you could reach out to?

Resting and doing something just for me



Being a mum is exhausting, both mentally and physically, and when you get a chance to rest or do something just for you, the benefits you'll get from this are huge. If you're feeling knackered or a little overwhelmed what can you do to relax, so you can recharge and start out refreshed? Consider getting off social media and calling a friend instead, taking a bath, reading a good book, having a nap, anything that will make you feel better- the housework can wait!

Encouraging a positive mindset



We are naturally trained to find it easier to think negative things and to focus on the bad stuff. It's a very primitive protection technique to keep us alive, to stop us being eaten by predators. Notice when you are telling yourself negative things, pause what you are thinking and choose to focus on something positive instead. Writing down some positive affirmations or things you are grateful for each day will help you get in the habit of doing this and some people find this an amazing way to start the day.

Now that you understand each area, fill in your Wellbeing Action Plan with ideas of what you could do. The more of these things you can do over the course of a week, the happier you will feel and overtime these habits will become easier and easier to do.



My morning routine

Have the My Morning Routine from your download pack at the ready before continuing.

Once upon a time, there was a girl who loved a lie in. Then she became a mum. The end.

Tiredness is a very real challenge when you become a new mum. You can wave goodbye to 8 hours sleep a night and say hello to all sort of ungodly hours. There are two scenarios of how your mornings can start. One is that you roll out of bed feeling knackered, make a cuppa and collapse onto the sofa and spend the rest of the day feeling like a lost zombie. Or you can create a structure to your mornings that will help you cope better with the tiredness and set you off to a positive start.

Consider what you could do as a morning routine that would make a positive start to your day. Consider how things such as what you eat and drink, movement, social media, fresh air, positive affirmations.... What would help you?"

Take it from another mum

"I couldn't get over how tired I was when I became a mum but I learnt that crawling out of bed straight to the sofa didn't help me at all! Once I started getting into a routine in the morning, just like I would have done when I was working, I could cope far better. My morning routine looked like this:

- ☛ *Feed and change my daughter while drinking a bottle of water which I left by my bed each night.*
- ☛ *Instead of looking at my phone while I was doing this I bought a radio for the bedroom, the music helped to wake me up.*
- ☛ *I always made my bed first thing so I felt like I'd accomplished something straight away (silly I know but really helped me!).*
- ☛ *Once downstairs I'd first open the kitchen windows then make myself a really nice coffee with hot milk, which always feels like a comforting treat to me. And the fresh air instantly helped to wake me up.*
- ☛ *I'd either have my coffee while watching a morning show on the T.V then do some stretches with my daughter next to me which always made her giggle! Or if it was sunny we'd sit in the garden.*
- ☛ *Then I'd head back upstairs for a shower... even on the days, I knew I'd get straight back into jogging bottoms! A shower really did blow away the last of the cobwebs.*
- ☛ *Lastly, I'd have a big breakfast and make a little plan for our day." Jenny*

Read through some ideas below and consider what would help you then print out and fill in your Morning Routine Plan to create your plan.

- ☞ **No social media** for the first hour after waking; it doesn't matter what accounts you follow, something you see will (potentially subconsciously) affect your mood, social media takes you away from the present and just isn't good for wellbeing and self-care.
- ☞ **Fresh air**; open a window and take a few deep breathes to help blow away the cobwebs, fresh air really is a powerful tonic!
- ☞ **Movement**; have your baby on the floor with you and do some stretches to help wake up your body and get oxygen flowing which will help energise you and release happy hormones.
- ☞ **Self-talk**; the mind is automatically programmed to focus on the negative but you really can be in control of your thoughts. Each morning set yourself up to feel positive, instead of telling yourself 'ergh, I feel like I'm dying, there's no way I can cope today', tell yourself something positive. 'Even without much sleep, I am coping so well, I am superwoman!'. 'I am so grateful for my baby, my home, my friends'. 'How beautiful is my baby, I can't wait to have a nap together later'. All these positive thoughts will lift your knackered mood!
- ☞ Find time to have a **shower**; water is good for the soul and physically refreshes you. Pop baby in a baby seat and let them watch you.
- ☞ **Look after your body**; eat real, nutritious food and give your body the nutrients and fuel to help it feel its best. Stay away from processed food that does nothing to help you and instead aim for something like a homemade smoothie, porridge or eggs. With foods like these, your body is being flooded with nutrients to help it stay healthy and help you re-energise. It's totally worth the effort.
- ☞ **Drink, drink, drink**; no we don't mean wine! Stick to water. It's incredibly important to staying well and gives you so much energy. Without it your mind and body will always feel fuzzy and tired so drink up!
- ☞ You will never regret a **walk**, even when you are dead on your feet, just 10 minutes stretching your legs in the fresh air will do you the world of good. On those days you decide to stay home, a little walk will break up that time and help you re-energise physically and mentally.

My boost selfcare plan

Have the My Boost Selfcare Plan from your download pack at the ready before continuing.

Even when you've done everything on your Wellbeing plan and stuck to your Morning Routine there are going to be days when you just feel meh! Maybe due to hormones, an extra lack of sleep, negative thoughts creeping in or extra stress from something outside of your control. When this happens we need to pay extra attention to looking after yourself so you can bounce back as quickly as possible.

Some days you'll be super-mum with educational outings, organic hummus and arts and crafts. Other days will be spent on the sofa, watching Cbeebies and eating fish fingers. And that's OK too.

Consider how you would respond to a friend that was feeling down? What words would you say and actions would you take to help cheer them up? Would you...

- ☛ Offer to take some of their workload from them.
- ☛ Spend time listening to them.
- ☛ Take them a gift.
- ☛ Keep in contact with them.
- ☛ Take them out.
- ☛ Use kind words to reassure and comfort them.

Now consider how you respond to yourself when you are feeling down. Do you use kind words and take action to help yourself feel better like you would a friend? Most of us probably don't.

Now print out the My Boost Selfcare Plan and use this to design your own plan to help boost your mood when you next need it.

Everyday we want you to take a moment to ask yourself how you are, really listen to the response that comes to you naturally, emotionally and physically. You can then decide what to do with this information, maybe you need to take more rest, maybe you need to do something more stimulating, maybe you need to make contact with some friends.

Take it from other mums

"I realised that it wasn't because the world was really ending, it was because I hadn't had enough sleep! So when I next started feeling like this, I'd change my plans and stay in so I could sleep when the baby did. And I'd wake up feeling like the world was good again!"

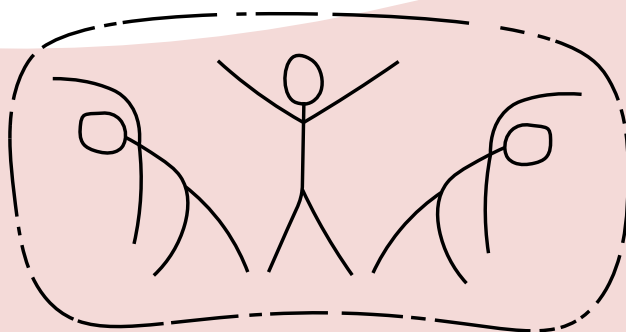
Hannah

"I realised that staying in each day was the worst thing for me, after a couple of days I'd start feeling isolated, bored and fed up. As soon as I started planning regularly meet-ups with my new mum friends, I felt like me again. Even though it sometimes felt easier just to stay in, breaking up the days with adult company is a must."

Lisa

"I was pushing myself too hard to always be entertaining the baby, doing clubs with her that I actually hated. I realised that it wasn't selfish to do things I enjoyed too, she was just as happy to be in a café or on a walk."

Emma



Getting social

We can't stress how crucial for your wellbeing getting social is... so we've dedicated an entire page to it! There's a chance you're thinking 'I've got plenty of mates thanks' and we're sure you do. But, **YOU NEED MUM MATES!**

Here's why:

- ☿ No one else will understand better what you are experiencing than your mum mates who are going through it too.
- ☿ They will be on a similar schedule to you and have the same free time to hang out.
- ☿ When you feel like you're doing it all wrong there's no better reassurance than your mum mates, who all feel like they are doing it wrong too (FYI, chances are you're all doing it right!).
- ☿ They are just as excited about every baby milestone as you are.
- ☿ They are just as interested in discussing baby poo, post birth recovery and nipple health as you are.
- ☿ When all you want to do is sit in silence, drink coffee and eat cake, they will be more than happy to do that too.
- ☿ They won't get annoyed if the baby manages to interrupt your conversation 253 times.
- ☿ They won't take offence if you need to cancel your meet up to take a nap.
- ☿ They'll get how hard it can be to be on time with a baby.
- ☿ They won't report you to the police when you tell them you're plotting to murder your husband if he snores his way through one more night feed.
- ☿ They won't judge you for not being able to string a sentence together or forgetting to bring nappies/money/spare baby grow with you.

Ok, ok, some of the above is tongue in cheek as it's hard to put into words why mum mates really are so important, but we promise you the friendships you make with other mums really are invaluable so put time into developing them.



Social media warning

We all know that social media can suck a crazy amount of time from us and trigger negative feelings. How many times have you found yourself an hour later browsing some stranger's account wondering why your life doesn't look as cool as theirs?

Our phones are a permanent fixture in our lives, sometimes rarely out of our hands, but is this really benefiting us?

Our words of warning are choose wisely how much time you spend on social media and what you choose to look at.

Be strict with yourself like you would your child! You wouldn't want them to grow up spending hours staring at screens and you don't want this for yourself either. Give yourself time limits at certain times during the day, and physically detach yourself from your phone.

Set up a phone charging point in your hallway and leave your phone there.

Instead of spending the night flicking through social media which can inadvertently lead you to question everything from the colour of your sitting room to the man you've married, put your phone out of sight (and reach) and actually watch the programme on the TV, read a book, phone a friend or chat to your partner.

And when you do indulge, delete the accounts that make you feel negative things about your life and pick the ones that make you laugh, educate you or inspire you.

Our brains were not designed for constant notifications, endless channels, multiple apps, texts, emails and WhatsApps. No wonder we feel overwhelmed, frazzled and on high alert. Let's slow down and turn off. It's time to give our minds the quiet and rest they need.

Lesson 4 - How to overcome the common new mum challenges

Common challenge 1 - Tiredness - Aka “Can I Die From No Sleep?”

Lack of sleep is one of the most challenging aspects of becoming a new parent and you'll find that sleep becomes a fascinating topic discussed regularly among new mums. When baby arrives you can wave bye-bye to 8 hours sleep and weekend lie-ins and say hello to being woken up multiple times a night... urgh. Eventually, babies will start sleeping for longer stretches but in the meantime how can we help ourselves to cope with less sleep?

What's the issue?

Firstly, consider how tiredness affects you now. When you are tired do you experience...

Low mood - Irritability - Lack of energy - Poor concentration - Forgetfulness - Anxiety

Now image experiencing the above but you have a demanding baby you need to care for. You want to just crawl back to bed but oh no you don't ... there's crying, there's feeding, there are nappy changes, there's playing, there's soothing, there's burping. Sleep is for the weak!



What's the fix?

Acceptance - This tiredness won't last forever. It may take some months but your baby will start sleeping for longer and eventually, you will have a full nights sleep back. Plus you will find you soon adjust to less sleep.

Look after yourself- Use your morning routine (see, there was a reason we got to create one!), nourish your body with good food, drink plenty of water, get fresh air and take gentle exercise. Cancel plans if you're too tired, nap when you can and prioritise looking after you- if you need put a note on the door telling visitors to sod off and your bedtime now needs to be at 7pm then do it.

Talk about your feelings and ask for help- Be honest with those close to you so they understand what you are going through. If you're feeling particularly irritable or low, share this with your partner before they start thinking you hate them. And most importantly ask for help, there's no need to be a martyr and people love to help and love holding babies! Close friends, grannies, partners, who ever is free ask them to take the baby for a while so you can get some more sleep.

Common challenge 2 - Change of your identity - Aka “What’s my name again?”

Not so long ago you were working, doing important stuff and generally bossing it. Now you are in an endless loop of mummy days; nappy changing, feeding, making gaga noises to your cherub. Yes, it's lovely, you've always wanted to be a mum, but some days you have this niggling feeling of frustration. What's that about?

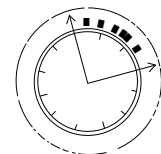
Activity

Take a moment to do this little activity. Grab a piece of paper and jot down the activities that make up your week. Next to each one write down what you get from the activity on an emotional basis. Which ones stimulate you mentally, which ones give you social interaction, which ones make you feel happy, which ones let you rest?

Now cross out the activities you won't be doing anymore when the baby arrives.

What's the issue?

You can see when you cross out the activities you can't do with a baby, you also take away the emotional benefit you gain from them. This can start to show us how things alter when we have a baby for us as individuals. For many, this can create feelings of frustration and over time a sense of a lack of identity.



What's the fix?

Alter your view - If you're feeling like you used to achieve things and now you're "just a mum", alter what that means to you. Being "just a mum" is hard work, it takes a lot of energy to look after a baby, even if on paper it is made up of easy tasks. So even if it feels silly to start with be proud of the everyday small wins. Kept up with the washing? Cooked a healthy meal? Been to a baby group? Got through a week with a poorly baby on no sleep? High five yourself lady!

Meet your needs as well as the baby's - Having a baby doesn't mean you need to totally let go of things you enjoy so ensure you have a fulfilling routine using your Wellbeing Action Plan, that meets your babies needs as well as your own.

Acceptance - Emotionally embrace this is exactly where you need to be right now and acknowledge that this is a precious time, it won't last forever.

Common challenge 3 - Body image - Aka “That’s not me in the mirror!”

It takes 9 months for your body to grow a baby and to do that it needs to make some changes. Like gaining some fat, adding some stretch marks and making the veins in your boobs more noticeable. When babies are born our bodies don't just ping back to the way they were before.

What's the issue?

Unfortunately, we live in a society where the images we are mostly presented with are airbrushed model-esq mums, gaily frolicking on a beach with their babies. Which can leave the rest of us feeling a bit down about our reflection. Well, it's all rubbish! Lots of social media accounts now show the truth behind postpartum bodies and female bodies in general, ditching the airbrushing and for a healthy dose of reality including fat rolls, stretch marks, cellulite, veiny boobs and loose skin aka **the normal human body**.

What's the fix?

Acceptance - Remember it takes 9 months to grow a baby and for most, it takes a lot longer to feel they are back to "normal" and for most, "normal" is a new normal. Maybe a few more tiger stripes, a few more rolls, a few more signs you have born life!

Be grateful- Choose what to focus on; you can choose to talk about yourself negatively or positively, which would you prefer? Every day you can choose to be grateful for the body you have and all it achieves. From being able to walk with ease and being able to breath without problem, to giving you arms to cuddle your baby with and hips to carry them on.

Focus on your health - Move your body, eat nutritious food, drink water – this will benefit you from the inside out.



Common challenge 4 - Questioning ourselves - Aka “I’m a fraud...”

"Why are they finding it so easy?"

"Why is her baby sleeping through the night and mine isn't?"

"She only eats organic, gluten-free, vegan food, maybe I should too."

"She's going back to work full time, maybe I should too."

"She's not going back to work at all, maybe I shouldn't either."

"They totally know what they are doing, I don't have a clue."



All this comparing and questioning is totally exhausting!

Our advice- **just stop it!** Being a mother is full of new challenges and experiences. This comes at a time when you are suddenly responsible for keeping a tiny human alive! It's natural to have moments where you question if you are 'getting it right' or to compare yourself to other mums, but in all honesty, if it feels right to you, and your baby is happy and healthy, then you are getting it right. Yes, you can look to others for advice and inspiration but never, ever compare what you are doing as a family with another family, and don't judge them either. We are all just doing the best we can and doing what is right for our families. Empower yourself to believe in yourself.

What's the fix?

Believe in yourself- No one will ever love this baby as much as you do, no one could ever be a better mother to your baby than you, your baby will never want a different mother.

Don't compare yourself- All babies are different and therefore how you parent will be different. Everyone's situation is also unique; do what suits you, your baby and your family.

Don't overthink things - There's so much information out there that it can be overwhelming. Look inward to you and your family and trust your instincts. Relax and just enjoy your own ride!

Common challenge 5 - Relationship changes - Aka “You’re just too annoying!”

Becoming parents can make your relationship grow stronger than ever and you will share experiences and emotions that will bond you for life. However, when a baby comes along you'll find date nights are replaced with early nights, conversations get interrupted by nappy changes, intimacy falls by the wayside and debates start about who has had the hardest day or the least sleep.

What's the issue?

Won't we be happier than ever now we are parents? Yes, you absolutely will. But there will also be a dramatic shift in your time, energy, roles and physical relationship. For some, this shift won't affect their relationship that much, for others it might cause some tension.

How to fix it?

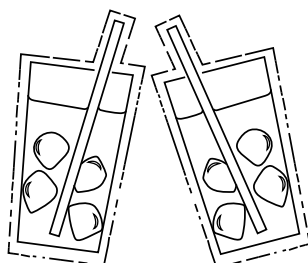
Acceptance - One of you may sometimes miss the care-free days when just the two of you were all that mattered, but you are a family now and neither of you would really want to change that.

Alter your expectations- Find other ways to do things you enjoy as a couple with the baby in tow. You can enjoy takeaways instead of meals out, you can find lunchtime restaurants instead of night time ones and have movie nights in instead of cinema nights out.

Make time for one another- Even if it's just a cuppa in the garden, make the effort to sit and have a proper chat with no other distractions.

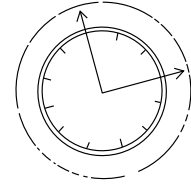
Acknowledge the change in roles- When our roles change so dramatically it can take a while to adjust and find a new flow. You may find there is some snappy conversation of who has had the hardest day and who deserves to put their feet up while the other makes dinner. Communication and honesty (delivered in a calm fashion!) is key to finding a groove that works for you both.

Understand your physical relationship will change, for a while at least - After experiencing birth you're not sure you're ever going to want to have sex again, but you will eventually we promise! A positive approach to a clash about wanting/not wanting sex is patience and understanding. The first time you have sex after having a baby can be a nervous time so it's more important than ever to communicate this to your partner. Energy levels will be lower than before and sleep precious, communicate this and a new balance will be found.



Common challenge 6 - Time frustrations - Aka "I'm late again."

When you have a baby, you are basically at a tiny dictators beck and call 24 hours a day. They do not care about your plans one bit. Everything you do is going to be altered by this new person in your life and at points you may find this frustrating.



What's the issue?

To explain the issue of how your time is affected when you have a baby we've decided to use an example... There's no food in the house so you've decided to pop to the shops. You've packed a changing bag just in case, got dressed in something other than joggers, found your shopping bags and gathered the other bits and bobs you need. You've put the baby into the car seat and just as you are about to open the front door baby starts crying. You know by now that it's not just a whingy cry but an 'I'm hungry' cry that can not be ignored. You've no choice but to go back in. So back in you go, you take off your coat and jumper and whip your boob out, or make up a bottle, and baby has a ginormous feed. Half an hour later they decide they are finally full and you can get up to start the leaving process again. But baby throws up on themselves. So upstairs you go to change baby's clothes. Once in nice clean clothes you go back downstairs, re-gather your things and make your way back to the car. Baby's car seat is safely strapped in, you're about to turn the key in the ignition when you hear and smell what can only be one thing. So back in the house, you go. Back upstairs you strip baby down to find an explosion of poo that doesn't just require a nappy change but a full bath. Finally, baby is sorted and you're carrying them downstairs when you feel something wet on your shoulder and in your hair. Baby vomit. Now you need a clothing change and shower too. Not only that, somehow it is now lunchtime and you are starving and there is no food in the house and you're pretty sure baby is nuzzling at you like they could be hungry again. Can you see how you may find this a tad frustrating??

What's the fix?

Nothing!! There's absolutely nothing you can do to fix this one! Other than, go with the flow. Accept there is no more 'popping' anywhere, understand there is military precision and planning needed for the simplest things. Accept that some days you will be unable to do anything other than sit on the sofa with baby- and that's OK. And remember online shopping is your friend.

Lesson 5 - How to...

How to hold a baby

The most important thing to remember when you pick up and hold a newborn is that they don't have any strength in their necks so you must always support their necks and heads. It will feel strange when you first pick up your baby but soon you'll be a pro! Here are some examples of how to hold your baby.

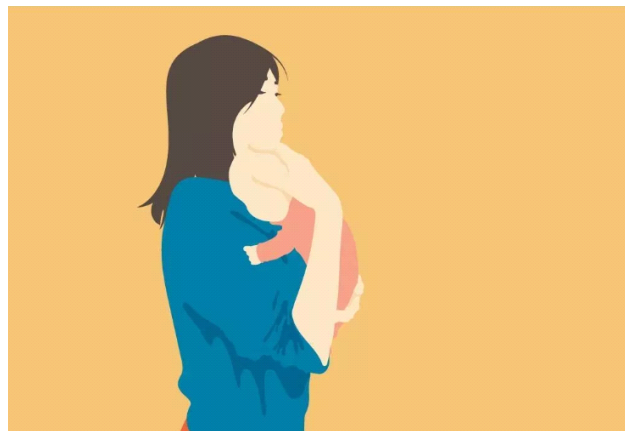
Cradle hold The cradle hold is one of the easiest and best ways to hold your newborn for the first several weeks of life:



- ☞ With your baby horizontal at your chest level, slide your hand from their bottom up to support their neck.
- ☞ Gently nudge baby's head into the crook of your elbow.
- ☞ While still cradling their head, move your hand from the supporting arm to their bottom.
- ☞ Your free arm will be able to do other things or provide extra support.

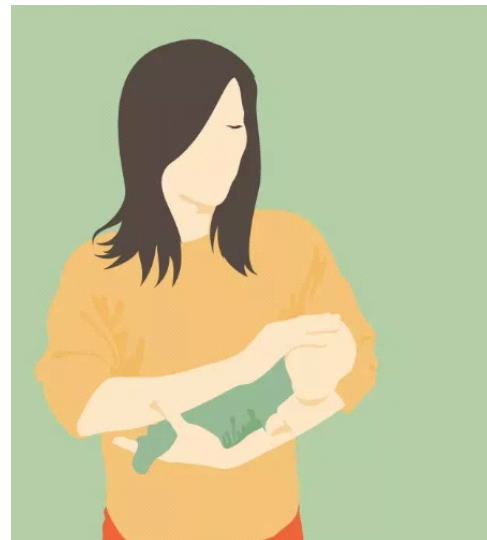
Shoulder hold

- ☞ With baby's body parallel with your own, lift their head to shoulder height
- ☞ Rest their head on your chest and shoulder so they can look out behind you.
- ☞ Keep one hand on their head and neck, and your other supporting baby's bottom. This position may also allow baby to hear your heartbeat.



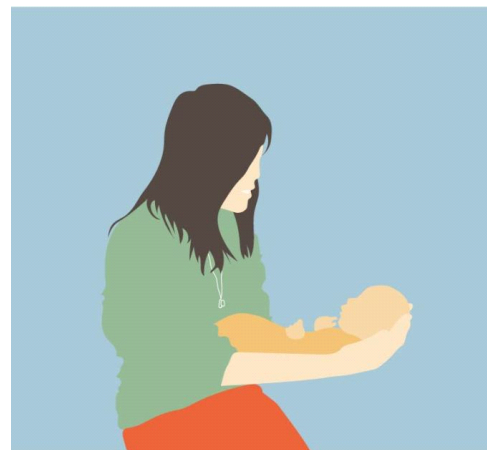
Belly hold

- ☞ Lay your baby, stomach down, across your forearm with the head up toward your elbow.
- ☞ Their feet should land on either side of your hand, angled closer to the ground so the baby is at a slight angle.
- ☞ This position is helpful if baby is gassy and needs to be burped. Gently stroke baby's back to work out the gas.



Lap hold

- ☞ Sit in a chair with your feet firmly on the ground and place your baby in your lap. Their head should be at your knees, face up.
- ☞ Lift their head up with both of your hands for support and your forearms under their body. Baby's feet should be tucked in at your waist.



Warnings!

- ☞ Sounds obvious but we still ought to say it- do not cook or carry hot drinks while holding baby. It's just not worth the risk.
- ☞ And another obvious one- never ever shake your baby whether that be playing and of course never in frustration. They are fragile and it doesn't take much to hurt them.
- ☞ And one last obvious one- never fall asleep with your baby. There are sad cases where parents have accidentally fallen asleep on the sofa and the worst has happened.

How to soothe a baby

Like people, every baby has a different personality and some will need more soothing than others. Babies will cry if they are:

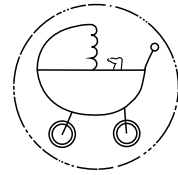
- ☞ **Hungry** - you'll know this as this will be trying to find food by sucking their fists or moving their head from side to side trying to find their milk.
- ☞ **Have wind** - after feeding babies very often have some trapped air which is painful so after feeding you must gently pat their backs which will help release it.
- ☞ **Bored or uncomfortable**- just like us, babies will become uncomfortable lying in the same position for long periods of time, they just may just want a change of scenery or some company!
- ☞ **Tired** - babies get grumpy if they are tired and may well need help dropping to sleep.
- ☞ **Needing a nappy change** - just as you wouldn't be happy sitting in some soiled pants, neither are babies!
- ☞ **Unwell or in pain** - if you are ever worried about your baby in any way phone your doctor or call 111. If they are unwell with a temperature and you are giving them Calpol, follow the instructions carefully, making a note of timings so you can give them the correct amount through the day.
- ☞ **Reflux** - If your baby seems to be in pain after feeds, they may be experiencing reflux. You can find plenty of information about how to help with this online including trying different feeding methods. Remember, there are professionals more than willing to help in any way they can, should your baby be experiencing problems.

You'll hear some people saying that you will 'ruin a baby by cuddling them too much'. Our opinion is that this is rubbish! They don't stay little for long, hug, hold and cuddle away!



Firstly respond to their needs- run through the list above to see if it's any of the issues mentioned and respond appropriately. If they are still unhappy they love contact and movement so you can try:

- ☞ **Holding**, cuddling and gently rocking them.
- ☞ Gently **rocking** them in their cot/baby seat.
- ☞ Taking them for a **walk**, or rocking them, in their pram.
- ☞ Giving them a warm **bath**.
- ☞ Try some gentle **white noise** like the radio, TV or a white noise app or soft toy. White noise often calms babies as it reminds them of the noises in the womb.
- ☞ Use a **baby carrier**. They love being warm and close to you, they'll be able to hear your heartbeat and for many mums, a baby carrier ends up being their best purchase.
- ☞ **Skin to skin contact** is when you have the baby in their nappy and place them against your bare chest which can instantly soothe. It's a lovely feeling and we recommend it for both you and your partner.



Colic

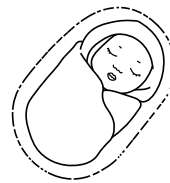
Some babies will still be unhappy despite you trying everything in the book. Colic is the term given to babies who are extremely unsettled. The NHS says:

- ☞ All babies cry, but your baby may have colic if they cry more than 3 hours a day, 3 days a week for at least 1 week.
- ☞ They may cry more often in the afternoon and evening.
- ☞ It may also be colic if: it's hard to soothe or settle your baby, they clench their fists, they go red in the face, they bring their knees up to their tummy or arch their back, their tummy rumbles or they're very windy
- ☞ It can start when a baby is a few weeks old. It usually stops by the time they're 6 months old.

If you are having real problems settling your baby you may like to get outside help from professionals such as GPs, health visitors or private advisers. There are also off the shelf and over the counter options which you can look into. Some bottle brands also offer bottles with anti-colic inserts.

How to keep a baby safe while sleeping

Accidents can happen when babies are put to sleep in positions or places where they aren't safe so it's an area that you need to pay attention to.

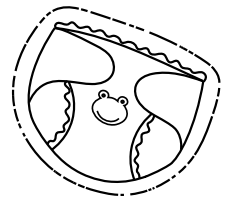


The NHS guidelines on safe sleeping are:

- 3 Place your baby on their back to sleep, in a cot in the same room as you, for the first 6 months.
- 9 Don't smoke during pregnancy or breastfeeding, and don't let anyone smoke in the same room as your baby.
- 9 Don't share a bed with your baby if you have been drinking alcohol, if you take drugs, or you're a smoker.
- 9 Never sleep with your baby on a sofa or armchair.
- 9 Keep your baby's head uncovered. Their blanket should be tucked in no higher than their shoulders.
- 9 Place your baby in the "feet to foot" position to prevent your baby wriggling down under the covers. This means their feet are at the end of the crib, cot or Moses basket; tuck the covers in securely under your baby's arms so they can't slip over their head. Use 1 or more layers of lightweight blankets.
- 9 Use a baby mattress that's firm, flat, well-fitting, clean and waterproof on the outside. Cover the mattress with a single sheet.
- 9 Don't use duvets, quilts, baby nests, wedges, bedding rolls or pillows.
- 9 Once your baby's old enough to roll over, there's no need to worry if they turn onto their tummy or side while sleeping.
- 9 Co-sleeping is considered a risk as newborn babies are so tiny, someone may roll on them or they may get stuck in covers and can't breathe. Co-sleeping becomes safer when babies are older but it isn't advisable when they are tiny.
- 9 Don't let your baby get too hot or cold; when you check your baby, make sure they're not too hot. If your baby's sweating or their tummy feels hot to the touch, take off some of the bedding. Don't worry if their hands or feet feel cool – this is normal.
- 9 It's easier to adjust for the temperature by using layers of lightweight blankets. Remember, a folded blanket counts as 2 blankets. Lightweight, well-fitting baby sleeping bags are a good choice, too. However, do not use these until the baby's head is too big to fit through the head hole.

- ☞ Babies don't need hot rooms. All-night heating is rarely necessary. Keep the room at a temperature that's comfortable for you at night – about 18C (65F) is ideal.
- ☞ Remember young babies cannot regulate their temperature.
- ☞ If it's very warm, your baby may not need any bedclothes other than a sheet.
- ☞ Even in winter, most babies who are unwell or feverish don't need extra clothes.
- ☞ Babies should never sleep with a hot water bottle or electric blanket, next to a radiator, heater or fire, or in direct sunshine.
- ☞ Babies lose excess heat through their heads, so make sure their heads can't be covered by bedclothes while they're asleep.
- ☞ Remove hats and extra clothing as soon as you come indoors or enter a warm car, bus or train, even if it means waking your baby.

How to change a nappy



- ☞ Ensure you are changing the baby in a safe place.
- ☞ Never leave a baby on their own on a changing table that is off the floor.
- ☞ Babies need their nappies changed regularly so make it part of your routine to regularly check them and if you know they need changing do it ASAP to avoid nappy rash.
- ☞ Nappy rash is when the skin gets sore from being in contact with wee and poo for too long.
- ☞ Nappy creams are used as a barrier to protect the skin and avoid nappy rash.
- ☞ It is very sore and can even bleed so avoid this at all costs with a good nappy changing routine.
- ☞ Babies can wee when you are changing them so be prepared for this! Ensure clothes are fully out of the way and use a towel under the baby.
- ☞ If changing a baby boy, place a wet wipe or cloth over his bits to prevent being sprayed.
- ☞ As tempting as it is to change a baby on your bed in the nighttime, it's not worth the risk!
- ☞ Never ever leave the house without nappies! Maybe leave a few spares in the car just in case.
- ☞ Some choose to use nappy bags and nappy bins to keep the house smell free. Never leave these within grabbing reach of your baby, you'll pay the price!
- ☞ Have a look into reusable nappies, they are better for the environment and most cost-effective in the long run. Plus, you can get really pretty patterns and they aren't as gross as you may first think!

How to bath a baby

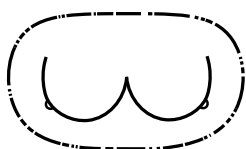
- ☞ Babies don't need to be bathed straight away or every day.
- ☞ When they get bigger it is a nice part of a relaxing bedtime routine.
- ☞ Most babies love baths and find it fun and relaxing but to start with not all will enjoy it.
- ☞ Safety is the most important thing when it comes to bathing.
- ☞ Never leave a baby alone in the bath even for a second.
- ☞ Never let baby's head slip under the water.
- ☞ New-borns and small babies will need you to support their head when in the bath.
- ☞ You don't need to use soap, water is fine to start with.
- ☞ Make sure you clean in between their rolls and under their chin as milk and sick can collect there which can lead to soreness and smells like cheese!
- ☞ There are lots of baby baths on the market which help keep them safe and save your arms, so have a look around before buying one.
- ☞ Having a bath together is a lovely way to bond!
- ☞ Beware, wet babies are slippery so make sure you are holding on them.

How to feed a baby

You may not have even thought about the topic of feeding but when your baby is here you will quickly realise what a hot topic in the parenting world it is. So, what are your feeding options?

Firstly, we'll start with the obvious- you have boobs which mother nature put there to feed babies with. How incredible is it that without the need for anything else our bodies can make a baby, birth a baby, then continue to grow and keep alive the baby just with our own milk! Our milk contains incredible health-enhancing benefits too which give our babies natural protection from illnesses. It even alters its properties according to baby's needs... mind officially blown!

However, despite being the most natural thing in the world, for some mums, it's not the easiest thing in the world.



Hear it from other mums



"Soon after giving birth to my son, the midwife asked me to feed him. I suddenly realised I had no idea how to do it! So she lifted him into position, took my breast and helped breast meet baby. My son latched on and started feeding straight away. Breastfeeding came naturally to us both and we never experienced any problems whatsoever, it was lovely. Some friends would ask me for advice but as it was so natural to both of us, I couldn't really tell them what I was doing that they weren't, it just worked!" Claire

"I had problems feeding straight away. Even with the help of midwives while we were still in hospital I just couldn't get my baby to latch on and even though I was ready to leave I was transferred to another unit so I could get more help. I was shown how to help the baby latch on and I thought we were doing it correctly but over the next few weeks, my baby wasn't putting on weight as they should. My nipples became cracked and bled after feeding, it was painful and I began to dread feed times. It was really upsetting. Eventually, I decided the stress and pain was too much for me, so I switched to a bottle. It took a while for my body to stop producing milk which was a bit sore as my boobs were so full. But once this passed, I was so pleased we could move on, that I could feed my baby without it causing me pain and that she started putting on weight." Emma

"Breastfeeding was fine for us but I found it hard being solely responsible for every single feed. I started expressing so my partner could take on some of the feeds and we could share night feeds at the weekend. This balance really improved my mood!" Pip

"I could never understand why I was having problems when my friends weren't, they made it look so natural, just popping the baby on the boob and the baby would peacefully feed. While there I was with a fussing baby, who wouldn't latch on for more than a few seconds, all the moving and latching on and off eventually caused my nipples to become really painful. I did all the research under the sun, I spoke to every midwife, asked my friends to show me how they did it and paid for a private lactation specialist. It was a good 6 months before we found a technique that worked for us and the pain eased and feeding became more natural. I was determined not to switch to bottle, it was just something that was so important for me to do so I didn't mind sacrificing my own comfort to get through it." Lara

What's our take on this feeding malarkey?

In conclusion, we urge you to try to breastfeed first as it's the most natural thing for baby and provides so many benefits to you and the baby. If it is tricky then ask for help and advice asap, there are trained specialists you can go to both privately and via the NHS, free helplines and lots of information online. If you are still struggling after seeking help and decide to move onto bottle feeding, either using expressed milk or formula, feel no guilt around doing so whatsoever!

Our opinion is that a fed baby with a happy mum is best. You decide what's best for you and your baby.

The end!

That's it, you now know everything you really need to know about becoming a new mum... but trust us it will all fall into place regardless!

And if you ever think 'I don't know what I'm doing', don't worry, we are all just winging it!

Enjoy your baby, much love the BumpStart team X

