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Countdown To Baby

Planning and Delegation Can Make Those First Weeks After Birth Much Easier

By Jodie Watson

From the editors: What kind of house will you walk into when you and your new baby come home from the hospital? Will there be diapers and wipes? What's for dinner? Who will clean the bathroom? Professional organizer Jodie Watson (www.SupremeOrganization.com) offers up some ideas to ensure that all your postpartum energy is free to focus on the baby.

Imagine the weeks after having your baby: You're lounging in your pajamas, napping when the baby does. Home-cooked meals are ready with no effort from you, and household chores get done without you having to lift a finger. Sound impossible? With some preparation and delegation, this could be your post-baby reality.

By using the help of your friends and family – and let's face it, if there ever was a time they are willing to help, it's now – you can do the things you want to do (spend time with your baby) and allow others to do everything else that needs to be done (laundry, cleaning, grocery shopping, meal preparation).

Since finding out you were pregnant, you have probably been in high-level “nesting” mode. And while buying baby clothes and setting up the nursery is all well and good, also make time to rally the troops and divvy up the tasks so you can do what you do best: Be a mom!

Stock Your Changing Station

You definitely want to have your baby's changing station set up, stocked and ready to go. Purchase items way before your due date. You don't want to be running out for diapers and wipes in the first few days after your baby gets home, and having supplies at the ready will allow others to pitch in easily when Baby needs a change.



Your baby's changing station will need newborn-size diapers, wipes, diaper cream, diaper pail and a changing mat. Have everything easily accessible so you can get what you need and still be able to have one hand and eye on the baby at all times. Take diapers out of their wrapping and place in a drawer or basket nearby. Keep wipes handy and the diaper pail close by. If you don't have a changing station, then create a portable one by using a tote to hold all the items you need to change your baby.

Make Some Meals Ahead

If you have the time and energy, a great thing to do in the last weeks of your pregnancy is plan out a number of meals that you can cook in large quantities in advance, and freeze in family-size portions. Also consider putting together a folder with information for local restaurants that can deliver. Put aside enough money in this folder to make it super-easy to order in if you need to.

Arrange Sitters For Big Brothers and Sisters

Who will be in charge of picking up and taking care of your older children while you and Dad rush to the hospital? Have someone they know well, and who you trust, prepared to drop everything to take care of your other kids. Make sure there is someone who could pick them up from school if needed, or who could get to your house easily if the new baby arrives at night.

Create a "Calendar Of Help"

Forgo some of the traditional baby gifts and instead ask family members and friends to sign up to help once a week for four to six weeks after your baby is born. Find out which of them are willing

to help you with grocery shopping, meal preparation, laundry, household chores or childcare for your older children and on which day of the week they are available to do this.

Use a calendar to keep track of your helpers. A great way to remind them that they have agreed to help you is to send a thank-you card. In it you could say something like: "Thank you so much for agreeing to go grocery shopping for me on Thursdays. I really appreciate you helping me with this in the first few weeks after my baby arrives."

If you want, you could ask the person organizing your baby shower to set up your calendar of help for you. They could also check in with people along the way to ensure all that has been promised is being done.

Your husband should be on your calendar of help to fill in for times not covered by friends and family. While it's important for him to have time with the baby, too, he can definitely help out with some household chores, grocery shopping and light cooking. Ask for what you need and discuss with him ahead of time so he's on board with the plan.

Grocery shopping: For those helping you with grocery shopping, create a master list of items and the store from which you want them purchased. Be specific about brands and other information. Rather than writing "apples," for instance, write "gala apples." Be sure to have the money available to pay for the groceries.

Meal preparation: Find out who can commit to bringing you and your family dinner on a specific day, just once a week, for four to six weeks. Let them know in advance of any dietary restrictions, but otherwise let go and

allow them to cook for you and surprise you with dinner on their day.

Laundry: Before your baby arrives, show your helpers how to use your washing machine and which detergent to use, etc. Or if they prefer, they can take your laundry home and bring it back washed, folded and ready to put away. Ask ahead of time if someone is willing to strip the beds, pick up all the towels and collect all of your other children's clothes. Use laundry baskets that allow you to separate whites and darks as you go to make their job easier.

Household chores: Vacuuming, dusting, straightening up, cleaning the kitchen and bathrooms are things that need to be done, but that you don't need to be doing. So make a list, enlist help and relax knowing that once a week or more, someone will be coming in to help.

Childcare: Arrange for your other children to go on play-dates or a sleep-over with friends or family once a week in the weeks following the birth of their new brother or sister. This is a great opportunity for aunts, uncles or grandparents to have some quality time with them. Get it on your schedule, so you and they know what's lined up for them.

Probably the hardest part of delegating this way is letting go of being in total control of your life for a while. Remember, it is only for a while. Before you know it, the first few weeks will be over and you will be handed back the reins of your life complete with all your household chores. In the meantime, allow yourself to be taken care of, enjoy the time you have carved out for yourself, and focus on taking care of your new precious little bundle of joy. ♥

Jodie Watson writes the "Ask the Super-Organized Mom" column for *L.A. Parent*.