




Center for

SACRED WINDOW STUDIES

YOGA VEDA INSTITUTE

LESSON 4



POSTPARTUM CARE FOUNDATIONS



THE POSTPARTUM PATH

Journey Through the Sacred
Postpartum Window

- The Journey Begins
- Finding their Stride
- Emergence

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Immediate Post Delivery

- Dramatic transition in the body, doshas are fluctuating rapidly, VATA is extreme and there is need for stabilization
- Warmth through heating pad, blankets, hot water bottles, closeness with baby
- Stability through breath and being held
- Birther will feel cold, weak, shaky, in pain
- Milk tonic, spiced ghee, broth, warm oily puddings
- Quiet, low light, slowness, love, gentleness




HELPING IN THE HOSPITAL...

Hospital stays can be a challenge in following conscious balancing postpartum principles.

Ways to Help:

- Hospital Checklist
- Modifying the room
- Food from home
- Making the best of the hospital food choices
- Limiting visitors



How else can we support the hospital stay?

THE FIRST DAYS

- Extreme fragility.
- Dramatic transformation.
- Natural overwhelm, in good and challenging ways.
- Drastic hormone shifts.
- Constant sleep disturbances.
- Trauma to body tissues.
- Energy used to develop milk production.
- Baby is learning to nurse.



Where do we see vitiated VATA? Where do we see PITTA and KAPHA?

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FIRST VISIT

- Plan on a longer time sitting and checking in. This is a time for hearing their birth story and letting the experience process for everyone.
- Careful observation during this time will help you assess where they are physically and emotionally. Also important to note is how partner is doing, and gently supporting simple and hugely helpful partner support tasks.
- Simple warm drinks and foods.
- Observe if there are any circumstances which may require outside professional support.



FIRST DAYS SUPPORT

HOW DO WE *COUNTER BALANCE* THE ELEMENTS OF AIR AND SPACE, VATA DOSHA?

- Extra warmth: blankets, pillows, constant hot water or tea, hot water bottle on belly, lower back or feet. Warm broths, puddings, soups with lots of ghee and proper spice to fire up depleted AGNI.
- Extra stillness. Protection. They should be in their bedroom cocoon. Food brought in, soft lights, quiet environment, little stimulation.



FIRST DAYS SUPPORT CONTINUED...

- Support for sore tissues such as warm, herbal vaginal rinse or sitz bath, gentle abhyanga.
- Ghee or cream for attending to sore nipples.
- Strong fenugreek tea for supporting the milk to come in.
- Plenty of support pillows
- Bedside Goody Basket for arms reach convenience



FIRST DAYS MIND/SPIRIT/HORMONE BALANCE

Estrogen and Progesterone fall rapidly during and immediately after birth.

Oxytocin rises immediately after birth supporting bonding, but also keeping birthers on alert for baby's needs.

Support Mind/Spirit/Hormone shifts:

- Breath awareness and pranayama to stabilize rapid shifts
- Emphasize rest for best integration and re-balancing



FINDING THEIR STRIDE

WEEKS 2-6. INTEGRATION AND HEALING

What are some other signs that a new parent is finding their stride?

What are some signs that partner is finding their stride?

- Agni is getting stronger, appetite grows
- Nursing is getting easier (hopefully!)
- Sore tissues are healing, bleeding slows
- Milkflow is strong (hopefully!)
- They are venturing beyond their cocoon
- Hormones are finding a balance
- Small routines are established



SUPPORTING THEIR STRIDE

TENDING TO THEIR SACRED TRANSITION AS THEY FIND THEIR FLOW

- Slowly introduce new foods.
- Daily routines that include: oil application, herbal support foods, rest, breath.
- Regularly timed meals and care routines.
- Continued attention to warm, slow, quiet, oily, stable.
- Continued mindfulness about limited stimulation.
- Overseeing family support.
What needs are arising?
- Daily Observation Guide.
Need for intervention?



CONSIDERATIONS FOR A FAST PACED LIFESTYLE...

Our society values go getters, and the pace of work, life and information moves fast. Often newly birthed people find the striking change of a slow paced sacred window, and a leave of absence from technology very hard to surrender to. How can we as Ayurvedic Postpartum Caregivers help support new parents with an aversion to taking it easy?



LISTEN...AND EXPLORE ALTERNATIVES TOGETHER

- Gently educate them before baby arrives (or whenever!) about the value of a slow pace: For vata and pitta pacification, increasing ojas for lactation, and a sattvic mind.
- When you see them busy with tasks that seem unnecessary to you, offer to take over and gently suggest they rest/take a bath/pranayama/etc.
- If they persist, help them redirect the need to do/control by moving it in a helpful direction. Give them the “project” of pranayama/mindfulness/time for massage/etc.



Is it a problem, or not?
Be a listener first, ask questions to help them discover a solution.

THEY MAY NOT FOLLOW OUR SUGGESTIONS! (OR EVEN WANT THE TYPE OF SUPPORT WE OFFER)

Because we feel so passionately about supporting parents and helping to fill in the wide gaps in support and lack of tradition seen so often in our society, it can be a shock when someone does not want to integrate the support we offer.

- Gently Educate
- Offer Unconditional Love
- Help where you can



- Proceed with Non-Judgement
- They will integrate your care in their own way and their own time.

TRUSTING THE PROCESS AND MEDICAL ANXIETY

Looking for problems rather than trusting the process. Vata “pushing” Pitta

Trend of keeping track of / logging processes in first weeks such as: bowel movements, wet diapers, nursing length, side, etc. Leaves many feeling anxious about their baby’s well being, even when things are going smoothly.

Encourage conscious observation without documentation unless there is a concern. Help support trust in themselves! *How have you witnessed medical anxiety?*

ESSENTIAL SUPPORTS



There are a few simple support measures that can move mountains in postpartum recovery.

They can seem too simple for significance. It is the simplest things that make the biggest difference in life.

As in the Universal Mother Principles, keep it simple and the body/mind/spirit will easily integrate/digest the support measure.

Hydration is an ESSENTIAL SUPPORT
during the Sacred Window.

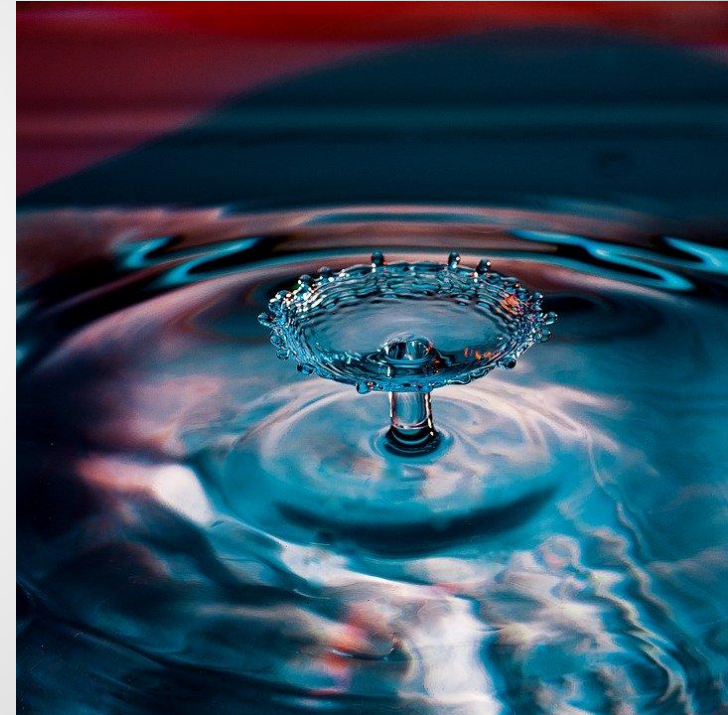
**Hot or warm water sipped throughout
the day will help eliminate AMA.**

When infused with spices such as
Ginger, Fennel, Fenugreek and others,
it will enkindle AGNI.

Hydration will encourage healthy
elimination and lactation.

*Simple and often neglected - this is an
easy job for partners and siblings to be a
part of supporting the birth parent on a
hugely important and simple level.*

WATER



AIR: BREATH AND PRANAYAMA

- The ultimate in REST
- Balance of the subtle tissues, filters out to ALL tissues
- Immediate effects
- Easy to incorporate at any time
- Can be simple or more involved
- Everyone can do it



PRANAYAMA FOR POSTPARTUM

Nadi Shodhana - alternate nostril breathing

Ujjayi Breathing - “ocean sounding breath”

Breath Awareness

Nothing elaborate is required. Simple consciousness of the breath and a centering of the mind and senses will help restore balance to the subtle qualities. This will immediately have a positive effect on the gross qualities of parent and baby.



YOGA NIDRA FOR POSTPARTUM

“Yogic Sleep”

Meditation Practice to support the parasympathetic nervous system and endocrine system- resting without sleeping.

Also supports mood balance, glucose levels and blood pressure.

[Article on and recorded Yoga Nidra meditation by CSWS Alum](#)



POSTPARTUM SUPER SUPPORTS

Simple and Powerful Support Measures to integrate from the beginning and for the duration of their Stride through the Sacred Window.

Promote SATTVA

Increase OJAS

Reduce VATA

Direct PRANA



HOT WATER BAGS/BOTTLES - VATA PACIFYING - WARM, HEAVY, STABLE

Where and When to Apply:

- Suggest they have several. Another lovely option are cloth bags filled with rice and lavender that can be heated up in a microwave.
- Place on lower belly, feet, lower back, upper back or neck while resting or nursing. Anytime sitting/laying down/desires it.
- Simple and cozy measure to bring warmth of body, mind and spirit.
- Particularly helpful for post cesarean birth, application of warmth support pain, healing of the incision, and drainage of fluids that can build up on site.



BELLY WRAPPING

Widely used practice throughout many cultures.

Belly wrapping has been used on every continent in postpartum care traditions.

There are different methods.

- Doula supported wrapping such as Benkung
- Incorporated into ceremony
- Faja/Rebozo wrap with long cloth/sarong
- Postpartum belly band

See Student Website for video examples.



Vata Pacifying: Stable (compression), Warmth to the hips (site of vata), lower and upper abdomen

BENEFITS OF BELLY WRAPPING

- Supports the reduction of 'space' in the abdomen, thus supporting the reduction of vata dosha
- Warmth, feeling of being held securely
- Supports the re-engagement of the abdominal muscles that have stretched during pregnancy (diastasis recti)
- Reminds tissues and organs where their original spaces are and supports the return of the body's pre-pregnancy shape
- Prevents excess bleeding by holding the uterus in a contracted and steady position.
- Supports posture and reduces muscle pain in back and shoulders
- Supports healthy agni
- Supports healthy circulation
- Reduces anxiety and supports a grounded sense of being

SACREDNESS

Postpartum Sealing
Closing of the Bones
Mother Roasting

These all describe ways of honoring the sacred work of birth and postpartum

Recognizing the significance of the work a birther does in pregnancy, birth and during the postpartum time on a personal and cultural level does so much to integrate the experience on a mental, emotional and physical level.

Ceremony places emphasis and importance on this journey. Belly binding has been practiced in combination with sacred ceremony around the world. We can honor our clients by recognizing their deep work and the greater meaning behind wrapping them with warmth, love and appreciation.

[La Matriz - Mexican sealing practice](#)

WRAPPING ROUTINE

Suggested routine for utilizing belly wrapping during postpartum. This may be modified as needed for preference and individual needs

- Wrap the abdomen with the wrap/method of choice every day for the first 40 days.
- Max of 16-18 hours of wrapping per day
- Begin wrapping gently, and increase firmness as comfort allows
- For cesarean birth, wrap gently after clearance from health provider.
- Follow birther's comfort level



BATHING, SITZ BATH, VAGINAL RINSE

VATA AND PITTA PACIFYING, SUPPORTS OJAS AND SATTVA

- Warm, hydrating, purifying, calming, gentle, bonding
- Simple or an involved process. Can do it themselves, or a caregiver can set up.
- Daily routine; one of the three each day.

Supplies to have on hand:

- Combination of herbs (see class notes)
- Peri bottles (several are ideal)
- Sitz bath toilet insert (optional)
- Crock pot and washcloths
- Large pot for making infusions
- Mesh strainer for removing herbs



IDEAL HERBS FOR POSTPARTUM SITZ BATHING

VATA AND PITTA PACIFYING, SUPPORTS OJAS AND SATTVA

- Comfrey
- Calendula
- Red Clover
- Lavender
- Yarrow
- Rose
- Sage
- Uva Ursi
- Witch Hazel
- Plantain
- Oats
- Sea Salt
- Epsom Salts



HELPFUL ROUTINES

HEALING TISSUES, BALANCING NERVOUS SYSTEM FOR BIRTHEE AND BABY

- Keep 3-4 peri bottles half full of herbal infusion in the bathroom. When birthee uses the bathroom, they can fill one with warm water and squirt on perineum while they are eliminating for comfort and cleansing.
- Keep a crock pot of herbal infused water warming in the bathroom with a stack of clean washcloths. Have the birthee press a soaked washcloth against their perineum after eliminating.
- Use fresh herbal infusion for baby. Great for supporting infant skin outbreaks, goopy eyes and diaper rash. Gently apply with a clean washcloth or cotton ball.

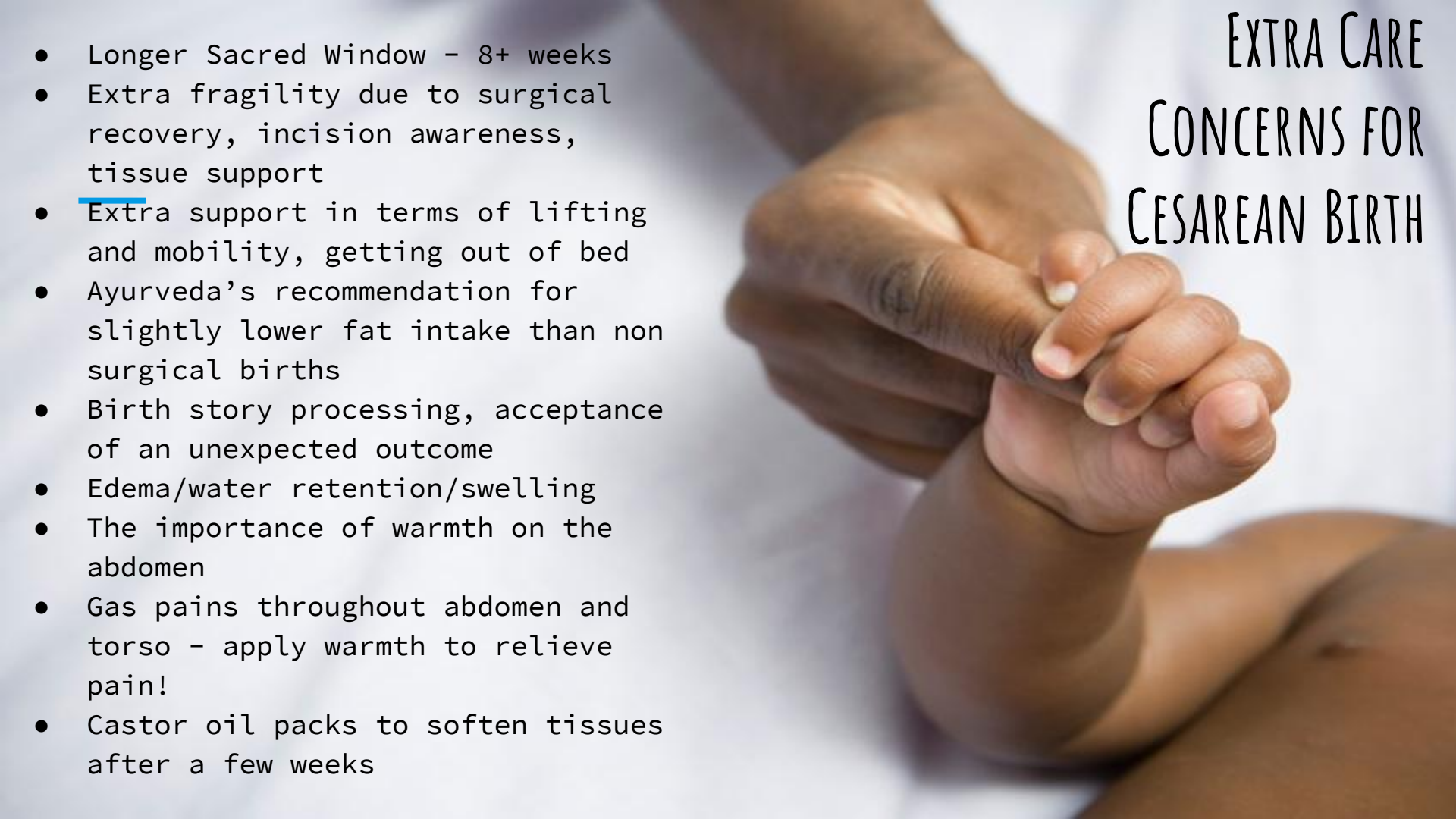


MOTHER'S COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT AROUND GUESTS

PROMOTE SATTVA THROUGH LOVE AND SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS, FAMILY & CAREGIVERS



- Building and Maintaining Support Networks: What needs to be done, Who can help. (Helping Handbook) Assigning a Facilitator.
- Partners, Family and Older Children - Gentle guidance in how to best support.
- Guests - protecting the space, setting boundaries. Guiding guests in how they can be helpful.
- New mothers/parents circles, virtual or in person



EXTRA CARE CONCERNS FOR CESAREAN BIRTH

- Longer Sacred Window - 8+ weeks
- Extra fragility due to surgical recovery, incision awareness, tissue support
- Extra support in terms of lifting and mobility, getting out of bed
- Ayurveda's recommendation for slightly lower fat intake than non surgical births
- Birth story processing, acceptance of an unexpected outcome
- Edema/water retention/swelling
- The importance of warmth on the abdomen
- Gas pains throughout abdomen and torso - apply warmth to relieve pain!
- Castor oil packs to soften tissues after a few weeks

SEEK MEDICAL SUPPORT WHEN...

- Bleeding is too heavy (a large menstrual pad is full in less than 2 hours)
- Foul smell or discharge from yoni
- Problem or discomfort with stitches
- Significant pain, bleeding, oozing or foul smelling discharge from cesarean incision site
- Fever in birth parent or baby
- Concern or anxiety that a medical professional can help alleviate





SHARED NEEDS

THE MIND/BODY/SPIRIT CONNECTION

You're in it together!

- Digestion
- Elimination
- Diapering and Bottom Care
- Cord Care and Incision Care
- Swaddling and Sleeping
- Burping and Gas

REFLECTION AND STORYTELLING

How have you observed the subtle channels of the mind (Monovahasrotas) during the first days and weeks of the Sacred Window - in yourself or someone else?

What does it feel/look like?

What helped?

Please unmute yourself and share!

FINAL PROJECT

Create a Resource and Referral Guide to use in your professional practice. Include local practitioners, as well as supportive online and media resources that can help parents and families find additional support professionals they may need.

The Resource and Referral Guide is also a way for you to gather and integrate yourself into the pregnancy, birth, postpartum and family caregiving community in your area.

THANK YOU!

