



Module 8 - Naturopathic Tips and Tricks

The Microbiome and Probiotics

More and more is being learned about the importance of the microbiome. Birth is when your baby's microbiome first becomes established and there is good research indicating that babies born via c-section are at higher risk of allergies and asthma. It is currently thought that these risks are due to the difference in initial microbiome exposures. So, many parents whose babies are born this way are concerned about how they can prevent this. The good news is that human milk is alive and has its own probiotic properties. In fact, milk directly from your chest/breast has a different microbial profile than pumped milk because there is direct communication between your baby's mouth and your nipple when they are latched. Recent research has been published suggesting exclusive chest/breastfeeding can correct these differences in the gut microbiome by 6 months of age. Meaning, one of the best things you can do to help your baby's microbiome after a c-section is to make sure breastfeeding is going well.

If you are considering giving your baby a probiotic, make sure you choose one that is specifically designed for babies and that it has a number of different strains of bacteria in the product. Some baby probiotics only contain one strain, and that's not all that helpful for promoting a diverse microbiome.

Bathing and Baby Skin

If you have a hospital birth, then chances are good that a nurse will come by and offer to bathe your baby. This can be nice if you want to learn how to hold and bathe your baby, but it's not necessary. Babies are not born dirty, in fact the cheesy coating on many baby's skin when they are born, called vernix, is quite protective. Many parents choose to leave this on or rub it into





Module 8 - Naturopathic Tips and Tricks

their skin in the first week of life. There is no rush to give your baby their first bath. As already discussed, birth is when your baby's microbiome is established, this is true for their gut as well as their skin. Soaps and shampoos are detergents which strip their skin of their naturally produced oils and can be irritating for new babies. Once you do start bathing, warm water and a soft wash cloth is all that are necessary. You don't really need to use soap until your baby is really dirty, like you just introduced them to blueberries, for example.

Postpartum Mood Disorders

This is a whole topic unto itself. Postpartum depression and anxiety are common, they can happen any time during pregnancy or the first 12 months postpartum. And it can happen in either partner. If you are concerned about this, you can take [this](#) self administered questionnaire and take the results to your care provider. Based on [Olivia Scobie](#)'s work, there are 3 keys to treatment, the first one if biological, this may come in the form of medications, herbs, supplements or even acupuncture, just something to help get your nervous system back to baseline. The next thing is counselling, which can't be undervalued, finding a practitioner who is well trained specifically in postpartum is essential. The last thing is community support. This can come in the form of parent groups, play dates, or even online support.

Some postpartum planning can also help decrease the risk of postpartum mood disorders. Having things in place that help increase your resiliency by making sure that your basic wellness needs are met. Some simple questions to think about include:

- How will I make sure that I'm getting the sleep that I need?
- How will I make sure that I'm getting the nutrition that I need?
- What things can I do to help me feel connected to my adult self?





Module 8 - Naturopathic Tips and Tricks

- Who is checking in on my mental health?

Tips for a Happy Newborn

Newborns, younger than 3 months of age, don't know that they are separate from their parents. They start living inside of you and so in those first few months it's not surprising that they need a lot of physical contact. They are new and trying to figure out if the world is safe and that their needs will be met. So, my top tips are to hold them as much as possible and to feed them on demand. Holding them can mean letting them sleep on your chest while you are reading or watching tv. Baby wearing is a great way to get some freedom while having baby close. You can wear them while you're doing things around the house or while you're out. Feeding on demand, like we talked about earlier, means trusting their hunger and full cues. It also means that if they have a dirty diaper and are hungry, feed them first because the diaper change will go a lot smoother if they have a full belly. Unless it's a blow out, obviously.

Changing Goals and Managing Real Life

This section is just a brief reminder that birth and parenthood are fluid. Things don't always go the way you planned. Making changes to your birth plan and how you parent is a normal part of the journey. It's also normal to have a lot of emotions come up when things don't go the way you thought they would. Honour your emotions as they come up. And remember that you can only make the best decisions that you can with the information that you have at the time.

