

Week 1 after the birth

Find out what you can expect in the first week after your baby is born – including how you may feel, your choices for the whenua/afterbirth (placenta), visits from whānau and friends, going home, and recovering from the birth.



How you may feel

Giving birth can be a tiring and emotional event. You may feel tired for the first few days and getting plenty of rest will help. You may be feeling overjoyed to finally hold your baby in your arms, or you may be feeling scared – or both!

Your midwife (or the midwife working on behalf of your specialist doctor) is there to support you, so ask for help when you need it.

The baby blues

Most women get the 'baby blues' around 3–5 days after giving birth (make sure that you and your partner know the signs of [postnatal depression](/your-health/pregnancy-and-kids/first-year/helpful-advice-during-first-year/postnatal-depression)). Keep your baby close to you as much as you can. Your partner should also spend time holding and being close to your baby.

The whenua/afterbirth (placenta)

The whenua is what fed and supported your baby while they were growing inside you, and in the last part of the birth it comes away from the wall of your uterus (womb) and passes out through your vagina.

After the birth you will be asked what you want to do with the whenua. The whenua is very special to some women and they choose to take it home. You could talk with your whānau before the birth and make a decision about the whenua with them. You can also include your decision about the whenua in your [birth plan](/your-health/pregnancy-and-kids/pregnancy/helpful-advice-during-pregnancy/getting-ready-baby).

To find out more about caring for the whenua, see [Information about caring for the whenua \(PDF, 83 KB\)](http://nationalwomenshealth.adhb.govt.nz/Portals/0/A%20to%20Z/A%20to%20F/D/D%20Disposal%20and%20Burial%20of%20the%20Whenua.pdf)

Visits from whānau and friends

After baby is born your whānau and friends will want to visit. It's up to you to decide when you are ready for visitors.

If you don't want any visitors for the first few days after baby is born, let your whānau and friends know. You could also ask them to phone or text first to check that it's OK to visit.

Going home

If you have your baby in hospital you may be able to return home with your baby soon after the birth, or you may stay in hospital for a couple of days. The length of your stay depends on what you want and how you and your baby are doing after the birth.

Before leaving hospital or the birthing unit both you and your baby will be checked to make sure that you are healthy and well. Your midwife (or the midwife working on behalf of your specialist doctor) will also talk with you about visiting you at home.

Remember that you need to have a car seat or capsule for your baby – the hospital or birthing unit will not allow you to leave unless they have seen it.

Recovering from the birth

Vaginal birth

You are likely to be tired and sore for a couple of weeks, especially if you have stitches or tearing. Getting enough rest is important – but it can be difficult until your newborn baby has more regular sleep and feeding patterns.

Your back will be weaker than before you were pregnant, so avoid heavy lifting. Remember to ask for help when you need it.

Your midwife will check your recovery in the coming weeks.

Caesarean section

It takes longer to recover from a caesarean section than it does from a vaginal birth. Your midwife or specialist doctor will let you know when you can go home from hospital. They'll check your recovery in the coming weeks and will let you know when it's safe for you to drive and to start lifting and carrying things again. This can take up to 6 weeks.

Looking after yourself

It's important to look after yourself after baby is born. You need to get as much rest and sleep as you can, eat and drink well, and ask for help when you need it. See the [Looking after yourself \(http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/pregnancy-and-kids/first-year/helpful-advice-during-first-year/looking-after-yourself\)](http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/pregnancy-and-kids/first-year/helpful-advice-during-first-year/looking-after-yourself) page to find out more.

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