



# HERBS TO SUPPORT POSTPARTUM MOTHERS

with Camille Freeman

## 1. How do we define the postpartum period?

Officially: Women are considered postpartum or in the puerperium for ~ 6 weeks after the placenta is birthed.

Unofficially:

## 2. What changes does a mother typically experience during this time?

Mothers experience dramatic changes both physically and emotionally/spiritually during the postpartum period. Community and social roles shift as well. Although none of these can be separated from the others, we'll divide them up loosely into the following categories:

### Physical

- Perineal/vaginal trauma
- Cesarean wounds
- Pelvic floor issues, diastasis recti
- Weight loss

### Hormonal

- Estrogens and progesterone levels drop significantly
- Prolactin, oxytocin, insulin and breastfeeding
- Postpartum thyroiditis, adrenals
- Return to fertility

## Mental/Emotional/Spiritual

- Adjustment to motherhood
- Baby blues & postpartum depression
- Bonding with infant
- Processing birth experience

## Breastfeeding

- Trauma to nipples
- Initiation and maintenance of milk supply
- Over/under supply

### 3. How can we help, herbally-speaking?

Ideally, an herbalist can support a postpartum mother both by providing herbal recommendations and by providing a sense of community and connection. Please review the attached list of herbs for potential use by breastfeeding moms to practice creating formulas for the following short scenarios.

#### Scenario 1

Create a topical preparation that you might recommend to a new mother who gave birth vaginally two days ago. She had a bit of perineal tearing, and came home from the hospital with 4 stitches.

YOUR FORMULA



NOTES



## Scenario 2

Create a formula for a mother who is 9 months postpartum and experiencing postpartum depression. She is reluctant to go on SSRIs because she is still breastfeeding. She has a strong family history of depression and has experienced untreated episodes of depression before becoming pregnant. Her symptoms include insomnia, anxiety, loss of normal interests and difficulty concentrating. She feels socially isolated as her partner works often and most of her friends do not have children.

YOUR FORMULA



NOTES



## Scenario 3

Create a formula for a mother who is 12 days postpartum. She is concerned that she's not producing enough breast milk because her baby has not yet returned to his birth weight (although he is gaining weight and producing plenty of wet and dirty diapers each day). Her pediatrician is recommending formula to supplement, and she's feeling disappointed, tired and overwhelmed.

YOUR FORMULA



NOTES



# RESOURCES FOR PRACTITIONERS WHO WORK WITH POSTPARTUM MOMS



- [The Nursing Mother's Herbal](#), by Sheila Humphrey
- [Botanical Medicine for Women's Health](#) & [Natural Health after Birth](#) by Aviva Romm
- [The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding](#) by La Leche League
- [Breastfeeding Answers Made Simple](#) by Nancy Mohrbacher – A highly-recommended textbook of breastfeeding problems & solutions.
- Mother-to-Mother support groups – Excellent for building community and meeting other moms.
  - [La Leche League](#)
  - [Breastfeeding USA](#)
  - [Babywearing International](#)
  - [ICAN – International Cesarean Awareness Network](#)
  - Local moms groups
- [Postpartum Depression continuing education unit](#) (\$0.99 on Kindle) – a well-researched exploration of the biomedical understanding of PPD
- [Find an IBCLC](#) (International Board Certified Lactation Consultant) – medical professionals comprehensively trained in breastfeeding support. Many insurances cover these services. Get a recommendation if possible, as some are more thorough and experienced than others.
- [LactMed](#) – databased from the National Library of Medicine on drugs and lactation. Many physicians are not familiar with this resource. Many medications are compatible with continued breastfeeding.
- [Infant Risk](#) – “call center based solely on evidence-based medicine and research. We are dedicated to providing current and accurate information to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and healthcare professionals. We are a training center for medical and pharmacy students and medical residents in the use of drugs in pregnant and breastfeeding mothers”
- [Fussy Baby Network](#) – phone support for parents whose babies are fussy/crying. They also offer information for professionals. From the Erikson Institute.
- [Doula Match](#) – Find a postpartum doula to support the mother
- [Why Won't This New Mom Wash Her Hair?](#) A Fascinating Look at postpartum customs from women around the world by Rebecca Tuhus-Dubrow
- [Share](#) – Pregnancy and Infant Loss support network, with online forums and group support.
- [Compassionate Friends](#) – Support groups for families who have lost a child
- [Foods for the Postpartum Mom](#) – best dishes to make & bring to new moms (Pinterest board)
- [BereavedParentsUSA](#) – self-help group for family members who have lost a child/grandchild/sibling

# LIGHT READING FOR BEDTIME



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CLICKABLE & UPDATED RESOURCES/REFERENCES

[www.camillefreeman.com/ahgpostpartum](http://www.camillefreeman.com/ahgpostpartum)



# HERBS FOR BREASTFEEDING MAMAS



This is a list I've compiled of herbs that I may recommend to breastfeeding mothers. These herbs do not necessarily support breastfeeding/milk production directly. Please note that some of these I would only use in specific cases/circumstances – they are not necessarily appropriate for all breastfeeding mothers (marked with a \*). Not all herbalists agree on which herbs are safe for us during breastfeeding, and research on this topic is scant. As usual, please do your own research before taking or recommending herbs. Idiosyncratic reactions are always possible! ~ Camille

*Allium sativum* (garlic)  
*Althaea officinalis* (marshmallow)  
*Anethum graveolens* (dill)  
*Arctium lappa* (burdock)  
*Asparagus racemosus* (shatavari)  
*Astragalus membranaceus*  
*Avena sativa* (oats)  
*Bacopa monnieri*  
*Calendula officinalis* (pot marigold)  
*Capsicum anuum* (cayenne)  
*Centalla asiatica* (gotu cola)  
*Chionanthus virginicus* (fringe tree)\*  
*Collinsonia canadensis* (stone root)  
*Crataegus spp.* (hawthorn)  
*Curcuma longa* (turmeric)  
*Cynara scolymus* (artichoke)  
*Echinacea spp* (coneflower)  
*Elettaria cardamomum* (cardamom)  
*Eleutherococcus senticosus* (Eleuthero)

*Elymus repens* (couch grass)  
*Euphrasia spp* (eyebright)  
*Foeniculum vulgare* (fennel)  
*Galium aparine* (cleavers)  
*Ganoderma lucidum* (reishi)  
*Geranium maculatum*\*  
*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*  
*Humulus lupulus* (hops)  
*Hypericum perforatum* (St. John's wort)\*  
*Lavandula officinale* (lavendar)  
*Leonorus cardiaca* (motherwort)  
*Matricaria recutita* (chamomile)  
*Medicago sativa* (alfalfa)  
*Melissa officinalis* (lemon balm)  
*Mentha spicata* (spearmint)\*  
*Mentha x piperita* (peppermint leaf)\*  
*Mitchella repens* (partridge berry)\*  
*Nepeta cataria* (catnip)  
*Paeonia lactiflora* (white peony)\*  
*Plantago spp* (psyllium)  
*Prunella vulgaris* (self-heal)  
*Rosa spp* (rose hips)

*Rubus ideaus* (raspberry leaf)  
*Sambucus spp* (elderberries & flower)  
*Scutellaria baicalensis* (Baical skullcap)  
*Scutellaria lateriflora* (skullcap)  
*Serenoa repens* (saw palmetto)\*  
*Silybum marianum* (milk thistle)  
*Stellaria media* (chickweed)  
*Taraxacum officinale* (dandelion)  
*Tilia spp* (linden)  
*Trigonella foenum-graecum* (fenugreek)  
*Urtica dioica* (stinging nettle leaf)  
*Vaccinium spp.* (Bilberry/blueberry/cranberry fruit)  
*Valeriana officinale* (valerian)  
*Verbascum thapsus* (mullein)  
*Viburnum opulus & prunifolium* (cramp bark & black haw)  
*Viola tricolor* (violet)  
*Zea mayes* (corn silk)

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