

HEALING AFTER A CESAREAN: MY JOURNEY & NATUROPATHIC TOOLS FOR RECOVERY

A personal guide to natural postpartum
healing for body & mind.



EMPOWERING YOUR JOURNEY WITH
COMPASSION FOR YOUR WHOLE BEING.

By: Kat Garner, ND

Disclaimer:

I am a licensed naturopathic doctor in Arizona, but I am not your doctor. The information in this booklet is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for personalized medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Please consult your healthcare provider before beginning any new treatments, supplements, or recovery strategies, especially following surgery or during postpartum healing. This guide is designed to empower you with options to explore alongside your care team.

Your journey is unique, and this guide is meant to empower you with options to explore in partnership with your midwives, doulas, chiropractors, physical therapists, lactation consultants, acupuncturists, naturopaths, massage therapists, herbalists, physicians, and anyone else you consider part of your care team.





Table of Contents

- 03 Introduction
- 04 Holistic Tools for Recovery
- 05 Beyond Waiting 6 Weeks
- 06 Tending to the Mind and Body
- 07 Belly Wrapping & Binding Ceremony
- 08 Baby Wearing
- 09 Breastfeeding (with Recipe!)
- 10 What I Wish I Had Implemented
- 11 Resources & Quick References
- 12 Supporting Your Birth Story & Beyond

A JOURNEY I NEVER EXPECTED



When I was preparing for my baby's arrival, I envisioned a peaceful home birth. I skipped the cesarean chapters in my books, afraid that reading about surgery might "attract" those thoughts into my reality. I never wanted to imagine that outcome.

But as life often does, there were other plans. My baby was post-term and breech, and I was faced with the difficult decision to accept a cesarean. It was hard to let go of the vision I'd held so passionately. What helped me cope was recognizing that this intervention was necessary to meet my baby safely and that I had exhausted every possible natural way to get my baby to flip.

Recovery tested me in ways I never expected. It wasn't just about healing my scar—it was about tending to my mind, body, and expectations. I'm sharing my journey and the tools I used as a way to share insights and impart strength to other mamas. Whether you planned a belly birth or not, my hope is for you to navigate your postpartum healing in an empowered light with natural support.

HOLISTIC TOOLS FOR RECOVERY



1. Caring for Your Scar

Caring for my cesarean scar became an important step in my physical healing:

- Castor Oil & Hypericum Oil: Applied topically (never ingested), these oils soothe inflammation and support tissue healing.
- Scar Massage: Once my scar was fully healed and I was cleared by my care team, I began gentle scar massage. With guidance from a pelvic floor physical therapist, I worked to release tension, improve circulation, and gain confidence in bringing mobility to this area.

2. Homeopathy for Physical and Emotional Healing

Homeopathy played a big role in easing both physical discomfort and emotional healing:

- Arnica Montana: Reduced bruising, swelling, and post-surgical trauma.
- Hypericum: Eased nerve pain and promoted healing.
- Bellis Perennis: Supported deep tissue trauma and abdominal soreness.
- Sepia: Balanced my emotions during moments of overwhelm and disconnection.
- Staphysagria: Helped process emotions over the birth I'd planned but didn't have. Also for incision pain.

3. Nutritional Healing

I turned to food & supplements as a key part of recovery:

- Warm, Nourishing Meals: Inspired by Traditional Chinese Medicine, I avoided raw or cold foods in the early weeks. Soups, broths, and cooked vegetables supported digestion and rebuilt energy.
- Protein & Vitamin C: Foods like bone broth & eggs provide complete amino acids. Buffered vitamin C powder helps boost collagen production.

4. Herbal Tinctures & Teas

Key to rebalancing the hormonal and emotional side of recovery:

- Daytime and Nighttime support: I regularly took two formulas to help reduce postpartum rage, postpartum blues, and to enhance natural sleep. These included adaptogens and were alcohol-free.
 - Tea blend: Pregnancy and Lactation safe herbs to replenish tissues and enhance healing such as rose hips, oat straw, red clover, and fennel.
- Consult your local herbalist and/or naturopath for safe, indicated herbs and effective dosing.*



BEYOND 6 WEEKS

WHILE HOSPITAL DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS PROVIDE HELPFUL GUIDANCE, HERE ARE SOME ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS TO HELP YOU THRIVE DURING THIS HEALING JOURNEY:

Read Your Discharge Paperwork Carefully

Discharge instructions are your roadmap to recovery. Take a moment to review them, and don't hesitate to reach out to your provider if something feels unclear. Understanding the recommendations ensures you're giving your body the best chance to heal smoothly.

Prioritize Your Scar Care

Your incision is a symbol of strength—treat it with care. Keep it clean and dry, and watch for signs of infection like redness, swelling, or unusual discharge. Gentle, natural remedies can promote healthy scar healing. Reach out if you find products you're unsure about.

Listen to Your Body

Your body is wise and will signal when it needs rest or extra time. While six weeks is the typical timeline for resuming activities like exercise or intimacy, be mindful of your expectations. If something doesn't feel right, honor that and give yourself the grace to heal at your own pace. I reached out to my pelvic floor physical therapist when I noticed burning and tenderness, which can be normal, but needs to be addressed with care.

Support Digestive Recovery Naturally

Post-surgery constipation can be extremely uncomfortable, but natural solutions can help (always consult before adding):

- Increase fiber-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Stay hydrated to keep things moving by adding a squeeze of lemon juice to water with Redmond's Real Salt. Coconut water is an excellent hydrator with naturally occurring ions
- Natural stool softeners such as prunes or flaxseed helped tremendously

For additional support, consider herbal teas with ingredients like dandelion or magnesium citrate supplements or even gentle tummy massages.

Ease Pain and Discomfort Naturally

Pain management doesn't have to rely solely on medication, but for some it's necessary to avoid suffering. Consider these natural approaches alongside or in lieu of medications:

- Homeopathic remedies for gas: Carbo veg or Nux vomica can ease post-surgery gas/bloating
- Use a warm compress or heating pad (avoiding the incision area) for relief from cramps or muscle tension. I love a good castor oil pack!
- Incorporate breathing exercises or mindfulness practices to calm your body and mind

TENDING TO THE MIND AND BODY

**HEALING AFTER A CESAREAN
INVOLVES MORE THAN
PHYSICAL RECOVERY.
TENDING TO YOUR EMOTIONS IS
JUST AS IMPORTANT.**

Journaling:

Write your thoughts down daily or as often as they surface. Writing helps process emotions that can feel overwhelming or difficult to articulate. It fosters clarity, uncovers the origins of emotions, and eases tension. Suppressing emotions can lead to stress patterns that may manifest physically. Try “stream-of-consciousness” writing for a mental detox to acknowledge feelings and declutter emotions. Gratitude journaling is another valuable tool, helping you focus on positive moments, which supports emotional resilience and healing.

Support Groups:

I found solace in connecting with others through Postpartum Support International (PSI) and online communities. Additionally, I am fortunate to have family to call during the late night tears. Lean on those who offer to help.

Reframing My Story:

Calling my cesarean a “belly birth” empowered me to see my experience as strong and beautiful—not a failure (Thank you, Dr.Q, for that terminology). Ask yourself, “How can I share my story with myself and others that feels empowering?” You did, after all, grow and birth a baby!





BELLY WRAPPING & BELLY BINDING CEREMONY

**A BELLY BINDING CEREMONY
AND A BELLY WRAP DURING
POST-CESAREAN RECOVERY
PROVIDE BOTH PHYSICAL
AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS.**

The belly wrap provided gentle support to my weakened abdominal muscles and gave me a sense of security when everything felt loose and tender. By stabilizing my core, I felt reduced pressure on my lower back which helped me stand taller and eased the transitions of standing to sitting to lying down. I would wear it a few hours at a time but check in with your care team to see what's right for you.

The belly binding ceremony represented a moment of honoring my body. In a time that felt overwhelming, this was about displaying reverence to my postpartum transition, reminding myself to acknowledge and appreciate these last 10 months as I carried and birthed my baby. The ritual was gifted by my sister and mother. As they bound the scarves around varying parts of my body, (skipping my scar since it hadn't healed) affirmations and prayers were recited with the goal of integrating my birth experience and embracing my identity as a mother. To learn more, search "sacred belly bind" and visit these websites:

<https://www.sacredpostpartum.net/sacred-belly-bind>

<https://www.handtoheart.biz/sealing-ceremonies-and-sacred-belly-binding/>

An example: loosely tie a scarf around your feet and recite, "thank you for carrying my body and my baby. I honor the strength of my feet. I symbolically walk into motherhood and trust my feet will ground me. Thank you."

BABY WEARING

**I LOVE BABY
WEARING, BUT
IN THE EARLY
DAYS I HELD
OFF AND DID
MY RESEARCH.**



I personally did not feel comfortable wearing my baby until about 10 weeks, so my husband and mother were shown how to wear appropriately. Here was my thought process on waiting and on types of wraps:

Potential Risks:

- Certain baby carriers, especially those with waistbands, can place pressure on or irritate the healing incision, leading to discomfort or delayed healing. There are carriers that do not exert pressure on the abdomen, such as ring slings or long wraps that allow for high positioning of the baby.
- Post-surgery, the core muscles are weakened, and adding the weight of a baby can strain your body, potentially exacerbating issues like diastasis recti (abdominal muscle separation) or pelvic floor dysfunction.

This is why I started with short periods of time and gradually increase the duration as my strength improved.

Potential Benefits:

- Hands free time
- Bonding with baby
- Soothing a fussy baby
- Decreased "monitoring the monitor"

Check out this helpful resource!

https://www.hss.edu/article_babywearing.asp



BREASTFEEDING

**NOURISH YOUR BABY IN THE WAY THAT FEELS ALIGNED FOR YOU
AND YOU FAMILY. IF YOU CHOOSE TO BREASTFEED, THERE ARE
WAYS TO HELP YOUR BODY PREP FOR THE POSTPARTUM DEMANDS**

Breastfeeding after a cesarean can sometimes be delayed due to the effects of surgery, anesthesia, and the recovery process, which may slow the natural progression of milk production. I remember feeling a mix of concern and determination when my baby initially lost weight—a completely normal occurrence in the early days as newborns adjust and feed primarily on colostrum, but nevertheless a nerve wracking experience. Two weeks before my due date I had been eating lactation cookies daily; I even had some in the hospital after the birth! By day three my milk came in, and with it, a sense of relief as I could see my baby getting what she needed to thrive.

I continue eating lactation cookies and drinking Mother's Milk tea by Traditional Medicinals to ensure my body gets what it needs to breastfeed. The ingredients for the cookies vary depending on which recipe you use, but they all contain galactagogues, which roughly translates to "milk producing" ingredients. Examples are oats, Brewer's yeast, chia seeds & eggs. Check out this recipe, baked and brought to me by my sister-in-law!

SIL's Delicious Lactation Cookies

First, combine these into a medium bowl

- 3 cups old fashioned rolled oats
- 1.5 cups unbleached organic all-purpose flour, GF if needed
- 5 tbsp brewers yeast (nutritional yeast could work)
- 3 tbsp ground flaxseed
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp salt

Next, whisk these in a small bowl, 2 ingredients at a time

- 12 tbsp unsalted butter, softened
- 4 tbsp unrefined virgin organic coconut oil, softened
- 1 cup cane sugar
- 1/2 tsp blackstrap molasses
- 1 large egg + 1 egg yolk (I've made with 2 eggs and they turned out fine)
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract

Slowly mix the dry and wet ingredients together. Then fold in 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F and line your cookie trays with parchment or silicone mats. Scoop the dough with an ice cream scooper or roll into 1-inch balls and place 2-3 inches apart. Bake for 14 minutes, or until the bottoms have turned golden, then let cool on pan for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to finish cooling.

NOTES

This made about 24 cookies but the whole family can enjoy them (no, they will not make just anyone lactate, yes they are scrumptious and deserve to be eaten guilt-free!). You can omit the yeast, they'll come out great. Keep in mind the yeast adds B vitamins and minerals! I also advocate adding 1/2 cup chopped pecans, Brazil nuts, coconut flakes, or 2 tbsp chia seeds to add nutrients and texture :)

WHAT I WISH I HAD IMPLEMENTED



Setting up a meal train

Asking my community for meal support after a major abdominal surgery would have made those early weeks so much easier. Nourishing my mental health, a baby, pets, a home, and a spouse was enough on my plate! Here are some helpful tips:

Coordinate with Other Help: Pair the meal train with other types of support, like childcare or cleaning services, if desired. (No community? Consider a postpartum doula or mothers' helper!)

Plan for Leftovers: Coordinate with others to space out meals and avoid overwhelming the mama's fridge space.

Accommodate food allergies or restrictions.

Provide Instructions for Reheating: Both my doula and aunt provided this when they brought meals and my mom-brain needed it! *Be sure to check online resources to set up a meal train or to get inspired.*



Integrating red light phototherapy

I later discovered this tool for scar healing and wish I'd started it sooner.

RLT has been shown to accelerate wound healing by stimulating collagen production and enhancing blood circulation to damaged tissues. This makes it beneficial for treating injuries, surgical wounds, and certain skin conditions.

[https://www.jaad.org/article/S0190-9622\(24\)00186-5/abstract](https://www.jaad.org/article/S0190-9622(24)00186-5/abstract)
<https://spinoff.nasa.gov/NASA-Research-Illuminates-Medical-Uses-of-Light>

RESOURCES & QUICK REFERENCES

NW GA BIRTH WORKERS

Here are the professionals I've worked with or know personally.

Doula

- Bethany Roberts with Heaven's Helping Hands

Lactation Consultant

- Brittney Poff with Revitalizing Birth & Lactation Support, LLC

Pelvic Floor Physical Therapist

- Alyssa Shedlarski with Tend and Release Physical Therapy and Wellness
- Dr. Loren with Barbelle Pelvic Rehab

Webster Certified Chiropractor

- Dr. Caitlin "Dr. Q" Quraishi with Cultivate Health
- Dr. Samantha Boucher with Boucher Family Chiropractic

SUPPORT GROUPS

Free online support groups with PSI, Postpartum Support International
www.postpartum.net

ICAN of Atlanta, a Chapter of International Cesarean Awareness Network

<https://www.facebook.com/share/1GksFNDYyK/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

REFERENCES IN THE BOOKLET *Not including those previously cited*

British Homeopathic Association. (n.d.). Arnica for post-surgical bruising and swelling. Retrieved from <https://www.britishhomeopathic.org>

Harris, J. (n.d.). Homeopathy for C-section recovery. Harris Homeopathy. Retrieved from <https://www.harrishomeopathy.com/blog/homeopathy-for-c-section-recovery>

National Institutes of Health. (n.d.). Vitamin C and collagen synthesis. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>

PeaceHealth. (n.d.). Hypericum for nerve pain relief. Retrieved from <https://www.peacehealth.org>

PubMed. (2022). Hypericum oil and wound healing: A systematic review. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36070793>

The American Botanical Council. (n.d.). Adaptogens for postpartum hormone balance. Retrieved from <https://www.herbalgram.org>

The Herbal Academy. (n.d.). Herbs for postpartum recovery: Rose hips, oat straw, red clover, fennel. Retrieved from <https://theherbalacademy.com>

Twin Cities Birth Center. (n.d.). Homeopathic remedies for postpartum healing. Retrieved from <https://www.twincitiesbc.com/blog/ten-homeopathic-remedies-for-the-postpartum>

Fed and Fit. (n.d.). How to organize a meal train. Retrieved from <https://fedandfit.com/meal-train-how-to>

Expectful. (n.d.). New mom meal train guide. Retrieved from <https://expectful.com/articles/new-mom-meal-train>

Meal Train. (n.d.). Meal train - Organizing meal support for new parents. Retrieved from <https://www.mealtrain.com>

American Pregnancy Association. (n.d.). Cesarean after care. Retrieved from <https://americanpregnancy.org/healthy-pregnancy/labor-and-birth/cesarean-aftercare/>

Healthgrades Editorial Staff. (2022, March 15). 10 remedies for constipation after surgery. Healthgrades. Retrieved from <https://www.healthgrades.com/right-care/preparing-for-surgery/constipation-after-surgery>

Mayo Clinic Staff. (2023, March 8). C-section recovery: What to expect. Mayo Clinic. Retrieved from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/labor-and-delivery/in-depth/c-section-recovery/art-20047310>

Mount Sinai Health System. (n.d.). Going home after a C-section. Retrieved from <https://www.mountsinai.org/health-library/discharge-instructions/going-home-after-a-c-section>

Verywell Health Editorial Team. (2023, August 10). Constipation after surgery and how to treat it. Verywell Health. Retrieved from <https://www.verywellhealth.com/treat-constipation-after-surgery-4147277>

Baikie, K. A., & Wilhelm, K. (2005). Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 11(5), 338-346.

Pennebaker, J. W., & Chung, C. K. (2011). Expressive writing: Connections to physical and mental health. In H. S. Friedman (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of health psychology* (pp. 417-437). Oxford University Press.

And, of course, life experience, colleagues' input, and years of study.

REPUTABLE NATURAL RETAILERS

Try to avoid Amazon purchases

Aveta Botanicals	Lotus Wei
Helios (UK) & Boiron	Oshala Farms
Herb Pharm	Starwest Herbs
Herbal Vitality	Wise Woman Herbals
Mountain Rose Herbs	Your local herb shop!



SUPPORTING YOUR BIRTH JOURNEY & BEYOND

You don't have to
navigate this alone.

Complimentary Discovery Calls
928-925-3080

www.THRIVEwithDrKat.com

Offering virtual naturopathic
consultations to help you thrive
through the transitional stages
of prenatal, pregnancy, and
postpartum.