

Postpartum Sleep Action Guide

Small, steady steps to protect your sleep — and your mood. Pick two or three to start.

Do these every day

- **Wake up at about the same time daily** — the single most powerful habit for your body clock.
- **Get bright light (ideally sunlight) within an hour of waking**, and get outside in daylight during the day.
- **Stop caffeine 6–8 hours before bed** so it isn't hiding your sleepiness.
- **Dim lights & put screens away 60–90 min before bed** to protect melatonin.
- **Keep the bedroom cool (65–68°F / 18–20°C), dark, and quiet.**
- **Do a 5-minute wind-down** (slow breathing or gentle stretching) before bed.

Protect your sleep & mood

- **Guard one longer unbroken block of sleep** — have a partner take one feed with pumped or formula milk.
- **Keep night feeds dim, calm, and quiet** so everyone resettles faster.
- **Accept help** with meals, chores, and older kids so your energy goes to rest.
- **It's the broken sleep, not just short sleep**, that hits mood — so reducing wake-ups matters most.

When your mind won't quiet

- **Keep a notepad by the bed** and empty your worries onto it before lying down.
- **Use a "worry appointment"** earlier in the evening instead of worrying in bed.
- **Name the thought** ("I'm having the thought that...") to take away its power.
- **Slow your breathing** — in for 4, out for 6 — to switch on your body's calm mode.
- **Use the 20-minute rule** — if you're stuck awake and frustrated, get up, stay calm and dim, and return when sleepy.

Ask for more help

- **Ask your doctor about CBT-I** (even by phone or online) — it improves sleep and lifts mood, without medication.
- **Reach out right away** for low mood lasting over two weeks, panic, trouble bonding, or any thought of harm.

If you're in crisis

Call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, U.S.) or go to your nearest emergency room. Asking for help is a strong, healthy step.

The one-line version

Anchor your wake-time and morning light, protect one longer block of sleep, keep nights dim and calm, park your worries on paper, and ask for help early. Small, steady steps break the cycle.