

(introductory music)

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MARYN: Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Hi, everyone. Maryn here wanting to talk about one of my most favorite topics in the world, the postpartum time. It wasn't always my favorite time. And I think there's still parts of me that struggle with accepting parts of being post baby for sure. But I've had some practice at this point and have helped many women through this time. And it's just something that never gets old and never seems like we have enough information out there or enough support or enough community around this time.

So like always, I choose a podcast topic based on what the need feels like it is at the moment. And having helped a couple moms lately through their postpartum time, I was once again reminded what things are helpful, how to plan, and I do have other podcasts on the postpartum. I have at least one, *Planning a Postpartum*. And I feel like there may be another one or two but already some good starting information with those podcasts as far as why we respect the postpartum in the first place, that it really is the first three months after birth. It's another trimester. It really is the fourth trimester. And that in many cultures around the world, more so than not, the postpartum time is very respected, and there are traditions and rituals and all kinds of things that commemorate this time for mother and baby and family.

So if you're in the U.S. or another western country, you probably don't see a whole lot of that kind of ritual or respect for the postpartum time. But, again, I think we can bring it back. I think we can nurture women to the best of our ability even if they're our friends or our neighbors. Everybody deserves this information. And I do think it's information that needs to be had in the prenatal time. Many a woman, including myself, has left the postpartum planning until you're actually sitting there with a baby, and then it's just too hard, I think. There definitely are plans and people that can support you, but really education and even just notice for those people can be really helpful. So, again, helping some women through postpartum lately and seeing that I could even be more clear with my ideas or suggestions beforehand. So I'm not waiting, as the midwife, to the last minute to say, "Oh, do you have this on hand? Or do you have that on hand?"

I try to cover postpartum preparation, but sometimes it doesn't seem too relevant to some families yet. Or sometimes you meet people late in care, and you just really don't have the time. So there's lots of excuses and reasons why we don't focus as much as we should, but I thought a podcast like this would be helpful. So I know for the women that I work with from now on I'm going to say, "Hey, will you listen to that podcast about

10 Tips for the Postpartum? And we can talk about it, and I'm happy to answer questions. And we can talk more specifically about what you might want to have on hand." Because, again, I feel like sometimes I'm not being super clear about things that someone could plan for.

So I hope this podcast helps you, if you're planning a postpartum time soon or if you're supporting someone as a doula or just as a friend or a sister, whatever, or just for future knowledge. To know that this time does require preparation, and it is sacred. And we really just live in a kind of culture that doesn't understand that. So that's why we're having to work so hard to make it possible to have a really restful, sacred, beautiful postpartum time.

So I have 10 tips for you today. Please recognize that many of them are not needs, per se. I think some of them are especially the first one. But they're tools for optimum health. So if I suggest an alternative therapy, let's say, or some kind of other supplement or modality, it's not that we have to have these things. It's not that you specifically have to. It's just some areas to think about how to support yourself. And it may be different how you choose to support yourself during this time.

So the number one tip is a huge tip, a huge topic. It is rest. Rest and more rest. In my other podcast, I think I cover the five, five, five tradition, and that's five days in the bed, five days on the bed, and five days around the bed, which is essentially around the room. So we're talking about two weeks, more or less, of resting and being close to your bed and your bedroom. And of course, again, you may choose to work with that individually. Maybe you'll be out in the kitchen or the living room at a certain point especially if you don't have other children. Definitely there are always to customize these things. But for those that do have children spending two weeks alone in your bedroom—well, that really doesn't sound like a horrible idea, does it? But you have to plan for it. And I think, if nothing else, you have to get your support people, your partner, your children on board with that just so that they know. You're going to rest for two weeks. You are not going to be coming out other than to maybe—I don't know what. Get something. But really people should be getting stuff for you. But that's the plan.

So I couldn't stress that enough. I find that a lot of new moms, especially with their first babies, don't really understand that. And that's okay because they haven't been that way yet. But then when they're sitting there, hopefully it makes sense. If someone is feeling really great postpartum, then they may not really understand. And they may have to find out the hard way by overdoing things and then not feeling good. Or perhaps it'll work for them to not rest as much as some. But I always say the rest isn't even for that immediate postpartum. I mean it is. You're resting your body. You're letting your placental site heal. All those things. But you're also resting so that three

months from now you can nurse a baby and you can live your life or get back to what you think normal life is, whatever that means for you. So it's like good pregnancy nutrition. We have to think ahead and plan for what's optimum health.

Now, again, the rest, rest, rest could be its own podcast really. But one more thing on that. I think we have to really look at how, as women, we don't rest, and we don't respect taking breaks. It's been said before, certainly I'm not the first, that even the cycle of life meaning a modern day life. We work five days. We get two days off. That's really a pretty male set up for the job people, for people that are working industrial jobs. I'm sure that's how it started. But as women, our bodies take a different cycle. And I do talk about that on a sacred moon cycle podcast. Just how when we're cycling and bleeding and ovulating that if we were to make a woman rest we would do that when we were bleeding. So our rest would be different. We'd work or whatever, live for three weeks out of the month without taking too many breaks. But then that last week of the month would be our rest.

But that's not how the world is set up. So I think there's lots of similarities there to the birth time and to the postpartum time. That it is a foreign idea. It is not even—I'm going to say accepted. But you would have to even understand something to accept it. So it's not understood, and it's not accepted. So we have to create that for ourselves. We really can't ask the modern day world to create that postpartum rest for us unless we happen to live in a cool place like Bali where we get our 40 days or whatever it is. But here it's not that way. So as women, we have to take the time to take care of ourselves and realize that the world is not set up to honor this time, but we have to anyway. And it's valid. And it's important. And it's sacred.

So number two tip for the postpartum, nourishing and easy to digest foods. That sounds so obvious. And, again, if I hadn't been helping a couple moms recently, I might even think that sounded too simple. But I'm constantly reminded how people aren't prepared. And that could be, again, for lots of good reasons. Maybe the baby came earlier. Maybe the baby came later. There's lots of reasons why we're not prepared sometimes. But with postpartum, if you can start thinking about foods that you want to eat and making them and freezing them months before, I think that's a really great way to do it. Making bone broth and freezing it, making meals and freezing them, having friends over, having a little party. Everybody brings a recipe. And if they're very generous friends, perhaps they bring all the ingredients, and then each friend makes the meal. And you can kind of all stand there together and do what you go to do. Lots of variations on that. But you have to have food after birth. And there's nothing worse than, I think, having a baby and having nothing around.

Maybe if you live in a place where you can get stuff easily that's one thing. But usually, the partner, whoever, doesn't feel like either cooking or running out for stuff. So having,

again, nourishing, easy to digest foods are really amazing. And if you're into the Ayurvedic tradition, which I know a fair amount about but isn't something I insist on. And actually, I haven't tried it myself in the postpartum. Then you would get a hold of perhaps an Ayurvedic cookbook for postpartum time and get recipes out of there. So the whole theme with the Ayurvedic postpartum is just really easy to digest, really warm, soft foods. They believe that the body has had a significant time birthing the baby and really needs to exert as little energy on digestion as possible. And that really the body doesn't have a lot to give for digestion. So lots of vegetarian kind of meals and lentils and almond milks and—not real heavy foods or not raw foods. So just something to consider, if you don't know anything about Ayurvedic foods. And if you don't or don't care, then any kind of food you like will do. Just that you can make it ahead of time and freeze it, I think is best.

And, of course, there's the idea as well of bringing other people in. So having a meal train. My problem with meal trains is that you have to wait until the baby is here unless you could be very proactive and start a meal train two weeks before. But you'd have to freeze the meals. So if you wait until the baby is here, what happens a lot of the time, which is really sad but it happens because people are busy, someone will set up a meal train for someone else. And then people won't really bring them meals. Maybe they'll get one a week or something. But they were counting on it, and then it's not enough. So I think we have to, unfortunately, take care of ourselves. As much as I wish communities would support postpartum families I don't know that we're currently at that place at least not here locally. So if you're in a similar place where your community isn't really supporting postpartum all that much, then you have to just do it yourself. And, again, you can have maybe friends or whatever help, but you have to plan ahead.

Number three, tip for the postpartum, blood building herbs and foods. So we lose blood after birth. That's a given. And that's really part of the physiology. So in most cases, especially for healthy women, it's not a big deal. A normal, healthy person, who has expanded their blood volume, can lose blood and maybe what seems like a lot of blood and feel fine. Conversely, some women can lose a little bit of blood and not feel fine. So in any case, I can't think of a reason that it's horrible to have just healthy blood building kind of stuff around. That could mean you do have supplements like iron, natural iron building supplements, but it can just mean food. So obviously, there's tons of food with iron, and that is iron rich. Of course, meat. But then greens are great. Chlorophyll. Let's see. What else? I feel like pumpkin seeds are high in iron. I could be wrong about that.

Nettles as an herb. Making an infusion of nettles or just adding nettles to your milk tea, which is my next tip. That's another great way to build iron. Molasses is a great way to build iron. Allegedly, and I only say that because I have not tried it, raw egg in grape juice—that sounds funny, right? That's something I learned a long time ago, and I still

see people recommending it. So perhaps one of you has tried it. But supposedly can build your hemoglobin up pretty fast. So if you are someone that tends to lose a lot of blood or just feel really weak after birth because of that then I would suggest for sure have some of these blood building things on hand. And you may not need them, but, again, if they're food sources, then really what's the problem?

Number four tip, kind of already said it, but milk building teas. Now, again, I'm not suggesting that we won't make milk without drinking tea. I don't believe that at all. But I think it's just a really supportive, nurturing thing to do especially if you have help in the postpartum. That someone comes over once a day and makes up a big pot of milk tea, that's just warm and yummy. And there's lots of great minerals and nutrients in the herbs besides building up the milk supply. So, again, not a necessity, but it seems like it really helps healing and keeps the mom hydrated and full of good stuff. And that's really the goal, I think, with a lot of these tips is to treat this time like it is precious and you are precious and your baby is precious and nourish yourself. This is not a time for skimping or not eating or eating junk or thinking about losing weight or any of those things. This is a time for nourishing. So anything that you could add to this list that would nourish somebody in the postpartum, let me know. It should be added.

Number five tip for the postpartum, a postpartum massage. That is not a luxury, my friends. I mean it can be. I understand that. But in the ideal world having that care for your postpartum just having birthed a baby is not a luxury. It is more of a necessity, I would say. I've definitely had postpartum where I did not have a massage, and I certainly survived and, ultimately, was fine. But the ones where I did were memorable. So it's another way to think about yourself and your body giving your body thanks for the job well done and, again, may take some planning. You may want to find a massage therapist that will come to the house. That's key. You do not want to leave your house. And so maybe if you don't have somebody in mind, then you want to meet them when you're still pregnant because they'll be coming to your house. And you'll be sitting there naked in bed, and you want it to be somebody you're comfortable with.

Back to the Ayurvedic tradition, they tend to massage with lots of hot oil. So if you can find somebody that does Ayurvedic cooking, that's great. If you can find somebody that does Ayurvedic postpartum massage, I would just say it feels amazing. And, again, their belief is that the body has worked hard and keeping the body really warm and oily is best. So it's literally a hot oil massage, and it feels amazing.

Number six tip for the postpartum, enlist help. And, again, this is in preparation for. So who is that in your life? Are they friends? Is it family? Do you have a church? Is it a mom's group? Who are these women or people that will help you out? And I think this is one of the hardest things for a lot of us to do which is to ask for help. We feel like people need to be our best friends for us to ask for help. And maybe we don't feel like

we have any best friends, so we don't feel like we have anyone to ask. But I think you'd be surprised when you approach people in the prenatal time about helping, and you can organize this any way you want. Lots of people when they have baby showers or blessings they will have a list at the event and have people put their name and phone number for specific tasks that they won't mind being called for such as walking the dog, going to the store, if needed, coming to do laundry.

So you can literally make yourself a list of helpers and what they want to do even. So that's a great thing to do. And you could put someone in charge of that as well. So if you get this great list of people, again, some of them you really may not know that well. It's okay. These are the things that people should do for each other. You can put another friend, perhaps the one you know best, in charge of everybody. So then that friend can organize these people to figure out when they're coming and how they're coming and that they're really clear that this isn't to hang out with you. This isn't to hold a baby. This is just to come because they said they would, and now you're taking them up on it. So you have to plan these things. It's just too stressful to be sitting there with a new baby and your house is in disarray and the dishes are piling up and to think that that's a great time to figure out who to ask unless you're really lucky. Unless you just have people. But then in that case, your dishes probably wouldn't be piling up. You'd probably already have help.

Number seven tip for a postpartum time, an herbal bath. So this is something I have sworn by from, let's see, probably my second birth. So my first home birth. It's something a lot of midwives offer, thank goodness. It's a fabulous idea. So making a bath for after birth out of herbs. And you can certainly make your own. It is not hard. You can buy them online from many people, from Etsy shop people or birth supply people. And what you're really looking for is an herbal sitz bath, herbal postpartum bath, and it gets brewed up just like a tea, like a lot of tea. And then you add it to the bath tub and sit in it, and it feels amazing. And it reduces swelling and just generally brings you back to earth, I think, after having a baby. So doing that for the first four to five days, even a week postpartum—I know for me as a ritual every time. That's one of my rituals. And I always look forward to it, and I always feel better after it. So I couldn't say enough about that. It's also a great gift, if you are expecting someone else to have a baby soon. Giving them an herbal bath mixture with salts or without salts is a great gift. So I think that's one of the nicest things you can give someone.

Number eight tip for postpartum is time to reflect on your birth and write the story. And this doesn't go, but it kind of goes. Just to kind of plan or sign for the door, maybe the front door of the house, that tells visitors, "Thank you. Mom and baby are great. We can't visit right now, but you're welcome to leave the food here in a cooler. If you're coming in to do housework, please just come in and go about your business. We are so grateful, and we'll let you know when we're ready." So that doesn't really go with the

birth story, but I guess I was smooshing two things together. The time to reflect on your birth story is different. But I think it's really important. So if you haven't birthed before, then I'll share with you that I feel like the first couple days after birth are just really strange and sort of magical before you kind of come back into your body. And writing a birth story no matter how the birth went really can be a great thing for healing. I mean even if it was a fabulous birth. It's great to get those words out on paper. But there is something about those first couple of days, I think, that you get a more raw version of your story. So that may not be a story you want to share or publish. That's totally fine. But just for yourself. I know I've done that almost every time written it right away. And then I don't know. Maybe I've gone back to read it or written a second version later, and they're really different.

So the first version is just fresh and, again, just really raw and real. So I always encourage women to find the time. Yes, you're tired. Yes, you're doing all this stuff. But you almost always have a time, half an hour where you're sitting there and a baby is sleeping, where you could get this down on paper or on the computer. I think that's a really important part of reflecting on your birth and your healing.

Number nine tip for the postpartum, have a plan for the placenta. Do not wait to figure out—well, you can wait, of course, to figure out what you want to do with it. I think that's fine in a way. Some women just aren't sure, so the idea of ingesting their placenta, for example, seems disgusting. But they often come around or change their minds after birth. So I'm always fine with leaving it open. Who knows what you'll want to do? But make plans for what you might want to do. If you want someone else to, let's say make capsules, then you need to find someone and hire them probably. I know for the women I work with I'm happy to process it the day after birth. But for me, that's just usually cutting it up into pieces and/or smoothie chunks. So it's not really an artistic job that I'm doing. But I think it is important. And I'm always happy to offer that. But if you don't have that, if you don't have a midwife, or whatever, then you need to probably find someone to do that for you. I don't think processing your own placenta after birth is something we are meant to do or should do in the ideal situation.

If you're going to make a smoothie out of any of it or part of it, then obviously have smoothie ingredients on hand. That's just pretty obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people have no plan at all. Having Ziploc freezer bags, the large kind, are great, so that way you can just put it in the fridge for a day and decide what you want to do. That's fine too. But just putting some forethought into that as far as what your options are and what you might want to do I think can go a long way because, again, it's just mental energy that you don't have to spend later after the birth when you're just wanting to sit there.

And the number ten tip for a postpartum time is kind of general. Just having other things on hand that resonate with you. So that might be herbal support. That might be homeopathics. That might be oils. Think about things that you may have experienced in other births, if that applies to you. So after pains. Yes. The uterus keeps contracting. Was that really awful last time? What kind of things could you have on time—on hand for this time? If you've been sore or you anticipate muscle soreness, what could you have on hand? Maybe you're an essential oil person, so you could think of it that way. Even hormonal support. So I'm not advocating that we're pouring tons of oils on ourselves and trying to supplement ourselves in all kinds of ways immediately after birth. But yet, I think there are things we can have around that are helpful. I know last year a mom had asked me, "What oils to have around for after birth?" And she was an oil person. So I thought, "Well, duh. Of course." For me, that's just something I naturally do. But if someone is interesting in that, then for sure. I can make a list of just things that can support the postpartum.

So I think you can do the same with whatever you resonate with, just kind of think about the sorts of issues you might be dealing with especially if you have to order ahead. Something like oils you might have to. And that way you have a little kit on hand for the things that might come up. So I hope that's helpful. My goal, of course, is to provide information so that you can have an amazing, sacred, beautiful, special postpartum time. Check the Indie Birth site for updates. And check out our new Indie Birth midwifery school, and that web address is indiebirthmidwiferyschool.com. We will begin enrollment in a couple of months for Summer 2017. Thanks so much for listening. Have a great day.

(closing music)