The Motherload

THE WEIGHT OF LIMITED POSTPARTUM SUPPORT

elvie × MOTHERLY

"It's time mothers had the respect and support they deserve"

With this new research, we're demonstrating something mothers in the US already know: postpartum care is simply not good enough.

This report will tell you more about women's experiences of maternal healthcare in America.

And it's time we all listened to them.

The government and employers

Family and community

Technology

By examining exactly how and where these systems are failing us — or holding us up — and so came up with some practical solutions to help us all do better by mothers. Then we can set the world to rights, as a better way to support every mother everywhere.

Tomi Ajadi
Founder, Elvie



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Healthcare

The Big Picture

New moms face a trio of serious postpartum challenges: Breastfeeding, pelvic floor health and mental health.

We all know this, right? But as newly found that while these issues are widely acknowledged as common hurdles, US healthcare systems don't do nearly enough to help women overcome them.

Well, we're here to change that, with this and advice on how to advocate for yourself and get the support you deserve. Buckle up, moms, we're gonna get these systems.

23%

GET ANY SORT OF POSTNATAL CHECK-UP AT ALL WITHIN THE FIRST SIX WEEKS

40%

"I'M A LITTLE/VERY ANXIOUS/DEPRESSED ABOUT MY BODY/MENTAL HEALTH RIGHT NOW"



"Once you give birth the healthcare system doesn't care much for the mother. The focus shifts to baby only."

— US mom

Breastfeeding

We checked in about your postpartum expectations, and you said your single biggest misconception was thinking breastfeeding would be easier.

83%

EXPECTED BREASTFEEDING FOR AT LEAST SIX MONTHS

84%

EXPECTED AT LEAST WEE FEEDING DIFFICULTIES

74%

SAW BREASTFEEDING AS NORMAL/ SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

27%

SAW CERTAIN COMPLICATIONS

67%

OF THOSE WHO HAD A LACTATION CONSULTANT VISIT AT THE HOSPITAL SUPPORT

42%

STARTING REGRET AT BREASTFEEDING, NOT AWARE

If you're struggling, it doesn't make you any less of a mom. It just means you're human. Breastfeeding is a learned skill — it doesn't for one to teach you. And it's not always as natural as it should be.

42% of breastfeeders in England developed at least one of these issues in their first six weeks: mastitis, clogged ducts/blocked nipples and thrush. Pain, difficulty balancing breastfeeding with other duties, sleep deprivation and feeling isolated are also common.

Most of these issues can be eased with proper information and support. Normal health consultants, sleep consultants, shortages... None statistics would back very different if our medical professionals knew postpartum intimacy.



"I have fought so hard for this and pride every drop of breastmilk I can give."

— US mom

Pelvic Floor

Let's chat about an unsung hero of pregnancy, birth, and postpartum recovery: the pelvic floor. It's a crucial support system for your bladder, bowel, and uterus.

79%

EXPERIENCED PAIN IN THEIR PELVIC FLOOR AFTER GIVING BIRTH

81%

SAY THEIR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER DIDN'T ASSESS PELVIC FLOOR HEALTH

31%

WERE OFFERED PELVIC FLOOR PHYSIO TREATMENT

Shockingly (or not-so-shockingly?), we found you were given minimum support and advice about pelvic floor recovery and treatment. Which is a problem, because it's a big deal.

As a mom's that can be strengthened or stay leaks and give you a better birth experience, we know it's important for your healthcare providers to give it the attention it deserves.

So, we're campaigning for pelvic floor physio to be offered to all moms. Check out elvie.com/pelvic-floor-physio to find out how you can help us get there — and we're not scared to demand it.



"Literally no discussion about pelvic floor. They only want to discuss birth control methods."

— US mom

Mental Health

Our research shows that 77% of you weathered mid-be, for 30%, severe mental health issues during birth. No wisecracks here—just cold, hard facts.

31%

FELT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS WERE NOT/NEVER ADDRESSED

45%

MORE LIKELY A MOM OF ANOTHER THAN SAY THEIR MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS WERE ADDRESSED

96%

SAY A CHILD OF ANOTHER FAMILY ADULTS WOULD BENEFIT FROM SUPPORT THEY GOT

We hear "healthy moms, healthy baby" all the time, but there's no evidence that your health care providers, actually believe it. In fact, only 23% of moms feel their healthcare professionals had their postpartum.



Mama's game plan

We know it all sounds kinda bleak. The good news? Knowing what you're up against and will help you prepare for postpartum and get your recovery on track (we know—you have to do everything around here).

GET YOUR ORGANIZATION ON, MOM.

Check with your healthcare provider to find out exactly what your insurance will cover. Then make notes about it all in another case.

ASK QUESTIONS.

Get your insurance provider on what services and support you're entitled to. Ask your healthcare provider what you need to be aware, and schedule in all questions covered.

PENCIL YOURSELF IN.

Schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider for your postpartum check-up. Put a reminder in the diary so you don't forget.

MILE ENQUIRIES.

Think about a lactation consultant if you're planning to breastfeed. Ask your healthcare provider for advice on where to find one. The earlier sorted, the better your chance to start.

NERD IT UP.

Read up on pelvic floor exercises and get squeezing in preparation for the big day.

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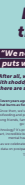
Community

The Big Picture



"The 'village' everyone talks about does not show up for everyone. I was, and still am, very lonely."

— US mom

Having a baby is beautiful, but really f*cking hard. We've found, though, that you have your cheerleaders, your partner, family, and friends. Our research has shown they're the bedrock of your postpartum support.

94%

SAY SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS ARE IMPORTANT/ VERY IMPORTANT

90%

SAY SUPPORTIVE FAMILY ARE IMPORTANT/ VERY IMPORTANT

83%

EXPERIENCED FRUSTRATION AND LONELY SUPPORTIVE TO THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

31%

THINK HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS SUPPORTIVE

14%

SAY PARTNER DOESN'T HELP WITH BABY CARE AT ALL

85% felt touched by their maternal and relatives. But more so!

The fact is you're not either. Everywhere in between. It's possible to start off feeling like a rockstar mom and end feeling like a complete mess.

Luckily, we've also found that postpartum support groups can help. And they're not only for moms. Dads can benefit from postpartum support groups, too. This was a new insight. It was great to understanding support groups for dads, and we're keen to see more of them.

There's also research that shows that support for partners can help mental, to be better mother, and improve antenatal.

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Lighten the Load

"We need tech that finally puts women's needs first.

After all, why should we have to make do with chubby design or pink spin-offs when there are self-driving cars in the world?"

Every year, I embarked on a mission building a unisex/no gender baby product. I'm talking about a baby bottle, a breast pump, a baby monitor, a baby carrier, and a baby car seat. All of these products are designed to be beautiful and functional without boasting any pink flourish and without the stereotypical assumptions that women are the ones who look after the children and men are the ones who go out to work.

And technology? It's providing solutions that were once just a dream, supporting the way we live and work today. Why shouldn't we expect the same from the world of parenting? Gender-neutral, functional, thoughtful, no-nonsense design.

For us, we collaborate our progress, we still need critical involvement change. Give dads an opportunity to be more involved, and we're all better off.

Together, we can drive the needle one gear.

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Mama's game plan

If motherhood feels lonely, it's time to tap into your support network and get at the hands-on help or late-night cheerleaders you deserve. Here is a 5-step checklist to help you find your village.

START THE CHAT WITH FRIENDS WHO'VE HAD BABIES.

They're happy to help, have a shoulder to cry on, and know exactly what you're going through. Plus there are support groups for moms-to-be.

FIND A NEW MAMA TRIBE.

We know, we know. Peanut, another 1 mission on your local parenting Facebook group, and there's a chance you'll find your support.

CALENDARIZE YOUR SELF-CARE.

Put it in the diary, and don't let anything get in the way. Even if it's only 30 minutes, you deserve it. Use it however you like, but we recommend using it to help you reclaim your birth process and postpartum self.

OPEN UP THE COMMUNICATION LINES.

Be honest with your partner about what you need. Ask them to support mum-time (yes, and them a game plan together).