



NEWBORN WELLNESS *Booklet*

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Newborn Wellness: **It Starts with Mom**



Those first newborn days can feel long, overwhelming, and full of emotions you never expected. There are many simple things you can do to make this season gentler—less overstimulating for your baby and mentally easier for you. This booklet was created to walk alongside you with practical ideas, small comforts, and encouragement to help set you and your newborn up for success.

Enjoy!

The Branch Moms &
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Maternal Mental Health: Why It Matters

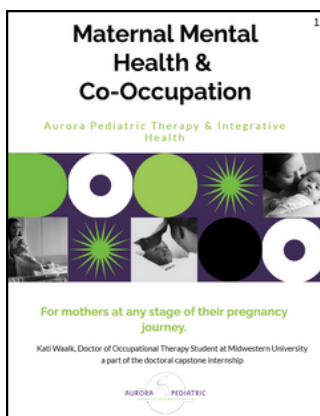


Your mental health is not only vital for your well-being- it directly impacts your baby's growth and development.

Research shows that higher rates of depression in mothers can lead to developmental delays in children. Depression can also interfere with effective milk transfer during breastfeeding, making feeding more stressful for both you and baby.



Motherhood is often painted as a joyful, fulfilling journey, but for many women, it can also bring feelings of loss- particularly loss of identity. Too often, moms feel pressured to “give up” the parts of themselves that once brought joy. **This shift can leave you feeling disconnected from who you are outside of motherhood.**



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Re-Discovering Yourself



Reclaiming your identity is not selfish- it's essential. When you nurture yourself, you show your baby what it looks like to live a whole and balanced life. One of the most powerful tools in this journey is building a strong support system.

Family Support:

Siblings or extended family can step in with small chores or childcare so you can rest or recharge.

Spouse/Partner Support:

Your partner should share in larger tasks, help regulate routines, and provide emotional encouragement.

Friendship Support:

Friends can be sounding boards, accountability partners, or simply bring laughter and relief.





Everyday Self-Care



You don't need grand gestures to improve your mental health- small, intentional habits add up.

- **Drink enough water throughout the day.**
- **Nourish your body with healthy meals and snacks.**
- **Practice micro-moments of calm by incorporating deep breaths into routines you already do- walking to the bathroom, stepping out of your car, or pausing before bedtime.**

Over time, these small breaths become automatic, helping regulate stress without extra effort.

Remember: a healthy mom is the foundation for a thriving child.





Mother and Baby Positioning: The Importance of Posture



Breastfeeding is more than nourishment—it's a physical relationship between mother and baby. Maintaining good posture during feeding prevents musculoskeletal pain (MSP), back strain, and fatigue. It also allows your baby to latch and stay latched comfortably.

A typical breastfeeding session can last 40–55 minutes. Staying locked in one position without support is one of the top causes of pain and frustration.



Healthy Feeding Positions

You don't need to master every method—find what works best for you and your baby.

Here are four well-tested options:

1. **Cradle Hold**

Classic and intuitive, with baby's head resting in your elbow crease.

2. **Football/Clutch Hold**

Baby tucked under your arm like a football; great after C-Section.

3. **Side Lay**

Ideal for nighttime feeds; both of you lie on your sides facing each other.

4. **Laid-Back Position**

You recline with baby on your chest, allowing gravity to assist.



Mother and Baby Positioning: The Importance of Posture



Posture Guidelines

No matter which hold you use, keep these in mind:

- Hips at no more than 90 degrees.
- Back supported with a chair or cushions.
- Both feet flat on the floor or a footrest.
- Arms supported with pillows to avoid strain.
- Avoid leaning too far forward or backward.

Relieving Tension

Between sessions, incorporate simple stretches. Shoulder rolls, neck tilts, and gentle back stretches can release tension, making the next feed easier and more comfortable.

Comfort for you equals comfort for your baby.



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FEEDING SESSIONS](#)**



Sensory Supports for Mothers of Newborns



Emotional Mirroring

Babies are incredible mimics. They don't just copy smiles or gestures—they absorb emotional states. If you're frustrated during a feeding session, your baby senses it and mirrors it. Protecting your sensory balance is a gift to both of you.

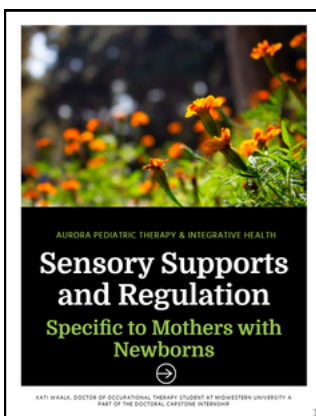


Preventing Sensory Overload

Your body processes the world through multiple sensory systems:

- Visual (sight)
- Auditory (hearing)
- Gustatory (taste)
- Olfactory (smell)
- Vestibular (balance)
- Proprioceptive (muscle/limb awareness)
- Interoceptive (body/emotional states)
- Tactile (touch)

When any of these systems are overwhelmed, stress rises. By learning to regulate your own senses, you stay calmer and better able to connect with your baby.



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FOR MOTHERS](#)**



Sensory Supports for Newborn Babies



Mom as a Regulator

In the early months, you are your baby's external regulator. Your touch, your voice, your rhythm—these all teach your baby how to calm and adapt to the world.

Kangaroo Mother Care

Skin-to-skin contact, at least one hour daily, helps regulate your baby's heartbeat, temperature, and stress response. It builds safety, trust, and connection.

Preparing for Feeding

Before nursing, use gentle stimulation:

- Speak softly to your baby.
- Lightly rub their cheek to activate the rooting reflex.
- Maintain calm surroundings to reduce distractions.

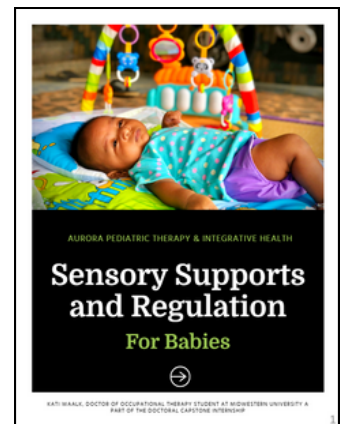
Stimulating and Calming Sensory Systems

Each sensory system can be nurtured through specific actions:

- **Visual:** Use soft, slow-changing lights rather than bright, flashing ones.
- **Touch:** Gentle stroking or massage regulates stress.
- **Balance/Movement:** Rocking or swaying soothes fussiness.

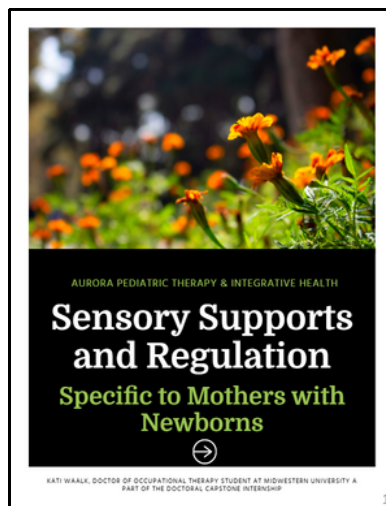
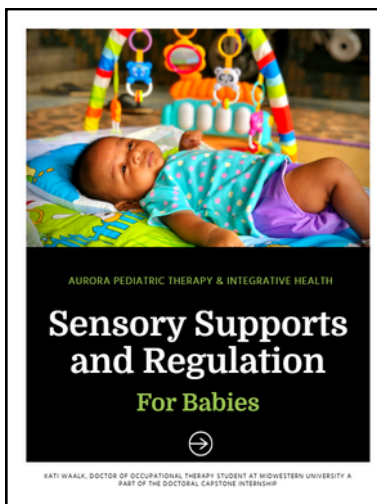
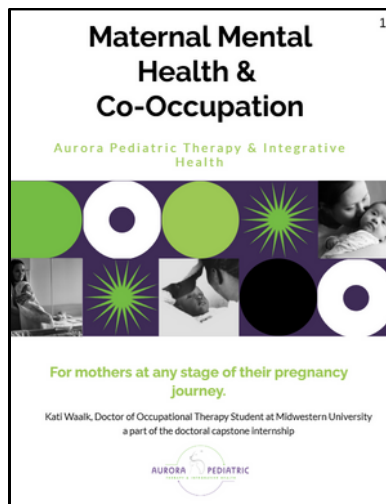
Learning when to stimulate (to increase alertness) and when to calm (to reduce distress) is key to bonding.

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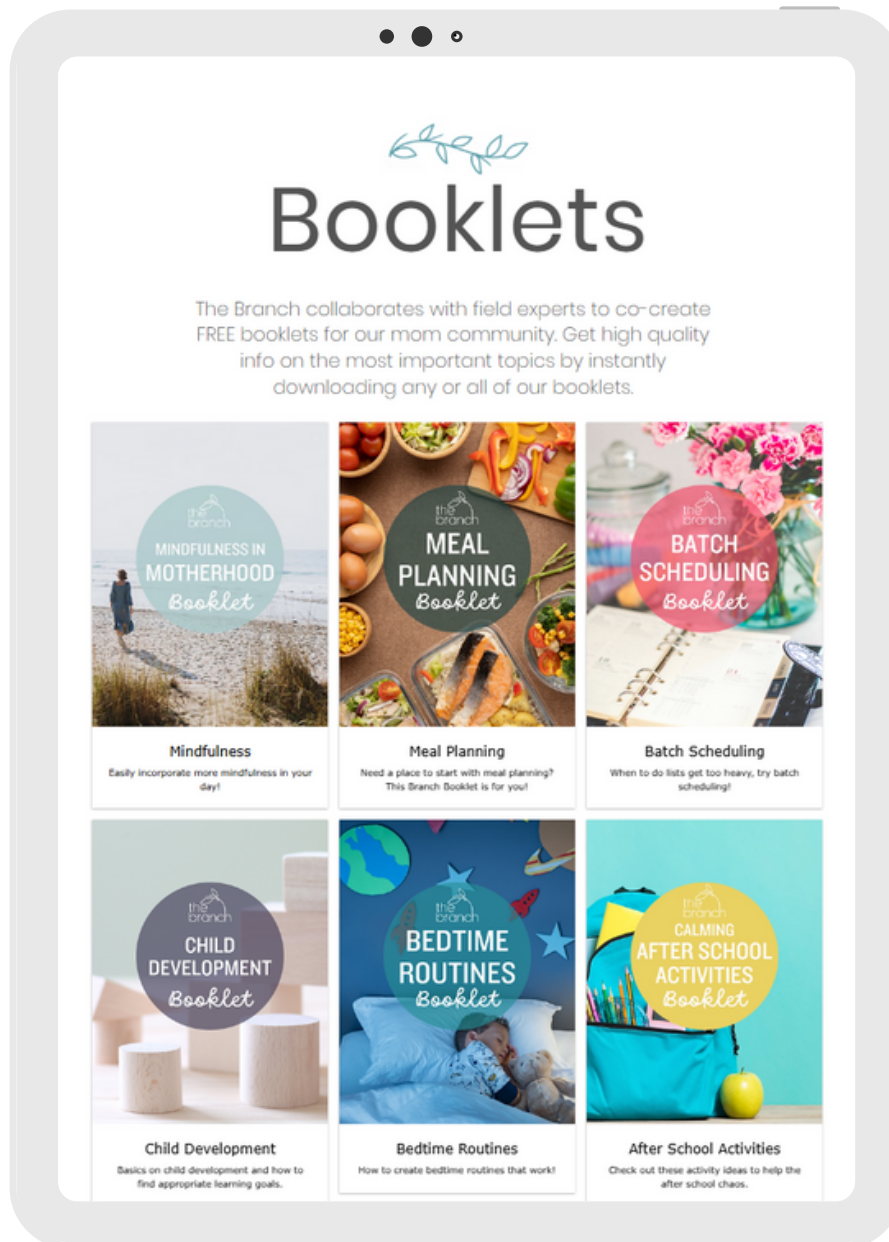


Information in this Branch Booklet was adapted from Magazines created for Aurora Pediatric Therapy & Integrative Health by Kati Waalk, Doctor of Occupational Therapy student at Midwestern University, as part of her Doctoral Capstone Internship. All information presented is purely for educational purposes. Please consult with your doctor for more information.

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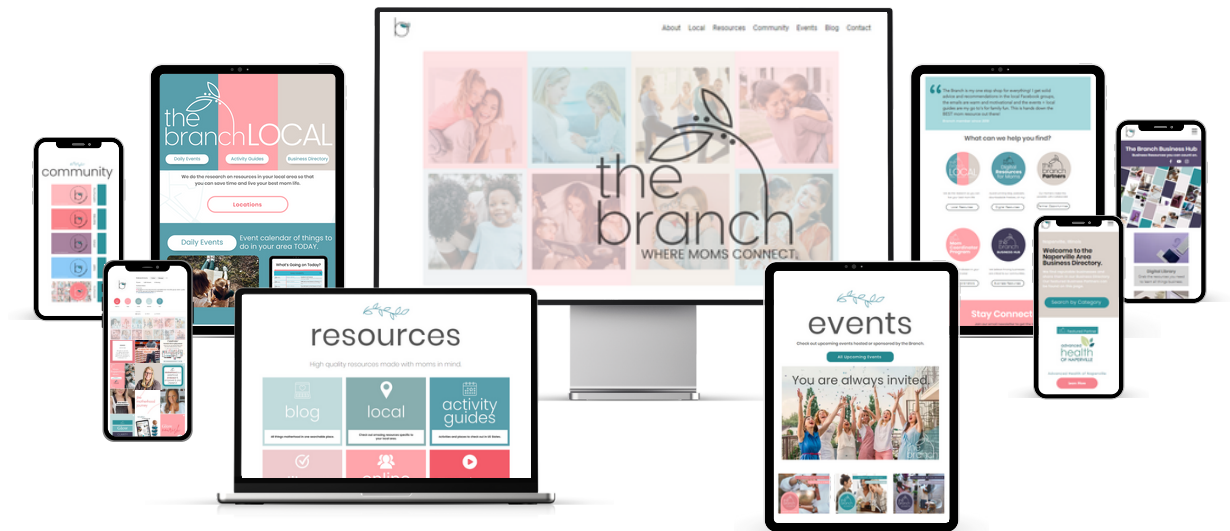
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