

PRACTICAL POST-PARTUM TIPS



Looking after a baby when you have a spinal cord injury may feel daunting at first but is achievable! Many parents worry about how they will safely carry, feed, wash and care for their baby while managing their own physical limitations.

Following a spinal cord injury, factors such as reduced sitting balance, limited upper-limb strength, or difficulty mobilising while holding a baby can create additional challenges. These concerns are completely understandable and shared by many parents with spinal cord injury.

With the right planning, adaptations and support, however, caring for a baby is absolutely achievable. There are a range of practical strategies and pieces of equipment that can help make everyday tasks safer, easier and more comfortable.

Below are some practical tips and equipment ideas that may help you care for your baby with confidence.

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[Contact our support network](#)

Looking after yourself following delivery: vaginal or by caesarean section

- Consider a support plan for continence management if you are unable to get out of bed for 24-48 hours
- Get bed rope ladders to aid sitting up in bed
- Use a sliding sheet, or similar, to aid turning in bed or transferring into a car. Use a satin sheet system to aid turning in bed
- Use a supporting pillow for both your bed and on your lap (to balance your child on)



Feeding/nursing baby



Credit: Momcozy breastfeeding pillow



Credit: Mamas & Papas Baby Bug 3-In-1 Booster Seat

Use breastfeeding pillows, V pillows and/or lap pillows. Some breastfeeding specific pillows have a waist strap. Also consider positioning supports and pillows especially if you have reduced upper limb movements.

For weaning and solids, use highchairs or baby feeding seats that secure to a dining chair to help with easier transfer of baby to the seat (something like: **Stokke Tripp Trapp**)

Once your child reaches the toddler stage, use chairs with steps, or stepped stools for them to get into with support.

Carrying your baby and moving from room to room with your baby

Research your options for baby carry slings/ baby slings, to help you move around with your baby. Look into ways of tying and securing them and make sure you avoid bulky waist bands and ones with rear ties as this would be uncomfortable across your back whilst seated in a wheelchair. Please note - they can be awkward to fit whilst you are seated. There are many that have easy to use clips - look for brands like **Ergobaby**, **Close Caboo** and **Baby Bjorn**.

Look for lap straps that support your baby/toddler whilst on the lap, [like the lap baby](#).

- Consider using a cheap, lightweight buggy if you're able to push indoors
- Use pillows, or a bean bag to support your baby on your lap and support the baby with your non-pushing hand. Use caution here as your baby is not secured on your lap



Credit: Babybjorn Babu Carrier



Credit: Push Mobility Primo Lapbaby Strap



Images: Snugglebundl



Picking up and placing baby down

You can use clothing to take hold of your baby – ensure it is a one piece, and securely fastened. Or buy something like a Snugglebundl – a useful textile wrap that enables lifting of baby:

Snugglebundl

Use staged/stepped levels to avoid reaching too far and think about sliding/ moving your baby whilst in their carry cot or on a mat, across to another surface, rather than lifting every time. Set up the area to allow easy transfers - think about a triangle layout.

Changing nappies and dressing your baby

If using a standard changing table doesn't work for you, use a surface where you can access underneath, like a kitchen table or accessible work area. If possible, remove any shelving underneath so you can get in with a wheelchair. Protect the area with a padded mat with raised sides to prevent your baby rolling. Alternatively, use your cot – if it is accessible or has drop down sides.

Install a DIY changing table attached to the wall (wood/kitchen worktop with changing mat on top with legs at front corners) at your perfect height. Put baskets/drawers next to it for easy access.

- Use snuggle towels to ease drying
- Set up and prepare areas and clothes beforehand - arrange shelves close by to avoid having to leave your baby
- Try alternative nappies, such as ones with velcro or poppers
- Try sleeping bags, instead of swaddling blankets



Credit: Charlie Chair

Washing your baby

Try something like a Charlie Chair - a raised shower seat (like a highchair, but more reclined and for the shower): **CharliChair**

Put the baby bath on an accessible table (using jugs to fill) or purchase a bath on a stand, like this one from Stokke: **Baby Bath, Stand & Newborn support**

Use baby shape supports in the bath, or in a large kitchen or bathroom basin, if you have access underneath. Be careful with taps

Try a Tummy tub - a bucket that can be placed anywhere and supports the baby when submerged, at a height that works for you: **Tummy Tub Original**



Credit: Stokke Flexibath

Sleeping baby/ tending to baby whilst in bed/ night feeding / nursing

You'll need an adapted or easily accessible cot - ideally with side opening doors or drop down sides, for easier access. Try products like the **Chicco Next2Me Forever Bedside Crib** or the **Roomie Glide Bedside crib** (which is also on wheels to allow easy repositioning).

For moving around in bed, and help with sitting up, you can use bed ladders and loops - put in the crook of your elbow to be able to lean and take hold of your baby: **Bed Ladders & Rope Pulls**



Credit: Amazon Rope Ladder



Credit: Chicco Next2Me Crib

Contact **REMAP** for additional support with existing equipment: <https://remap.org.uk/>

Transport and baby – car seats, carry cots, slings, pushchairs and buggies



Credit: Maxi Cosi Coral 360

Baby car seats now have many advanced design features to allow for easier access for putting baby into the car. Look out for car seats that offer a swivel base. Some also slide out from the car, increasing the ease of access. You can find a specialist online, some good brands to look at are: **Maxi Cosi Emerald 360 Silvercoross, Joie Spin and Cybex Cloud T**

Use a carry cot that may rest on your lap with a waist or body strap (such as the **Maxi Cosi Coral**). You can also tie a baby sling, scarf or similar around the car seat and users waist whilst on your lap.

With pushchairs and buggies you'll need to research the most suitable options for you. Think about:

- **How heavy it is?**
- **The brakes - can you reach them, how are they operated?**
- **The type of wheels - where are you likely to use it (in towns or through parks and countryside?)**
- **Can you fold and unfold it unaided?**
- **Can you lift it into the car?**
- **What help will you have when using a pushchair?**

Pushing your wheelchair and pushing a pushchair can be difficult, but there is a knack that can be learned with good wheelchair skills. Some pushchairs have been adapted to allow attachment to the wheelchair, allowing you to self-propel with the pushchair attached. There are no commercially available pushchairs for wheelchairs that are currently available in the UK.

Contact [REMAP](https://remap.org.uk/) - an engineering charity that has done many adaptations like this: <https://remap.org.uk/>

Playing with your baby

If you're planning to attend any baby group, make sure that any supporting teams know you are a wheelchair user. Check if the classes are accessible to you beforehand to avoid any disappointment.

For chair to floor transfers, use an aerobics step or similar to reduce the height between floor to the wheelchair - this will ease your transfer to the floor to play. Ask your therapist for advice if you have any concerns.

Think about using soft play mats – for when you are sitting or laying down with baby. You need to protect your skin when you're on the floor - the Vicair Allrounder seat pad is a helpful aid: **Vicair AllRounder O2 Activity Cushion**



Credit: Vicair All Rounder

- Use a playpen for when you need to contain your baby (going to the toilet etc) - or use your cot as a play pen, especially if it has side opening doors and space underneath to access with your wheelchair.

Managing alone with baby

- Ensure supporting teams know you are a wheelchair user
- Have a support network ready for you if you need it
- Prepare and plan ahead as much as it is possible with a baby! Have enough supplies and things within reach

What to do in an emergency or if you are unwell

Have a list of contacts available for an emergency

Call 999

Contact social services as required

Maintain an open and clear communication and relationships with your maternity team and midwife health visitor / hospital setting, about what is needed to keep you and baby happy and safe.

Visit the place of birth as many times as possible and introduce yourself to staff members so they know who you are. Familiar faces are always good.

Keep contact details close by and easy to find.

Forums and links

Facebook groups

Use SCI forums for advice, parenting groups and second hand equipment:

Facebook Marketplace

Powder room – Women and SCI (Often discussion around pregnancy and baby care)

SCI Owners Club

Other websites/forums

Mind Body Dad - <https://www.mindbodydad.com/body/parenting-adaptive-equipment>

Mumsnet Parenting Forum - <https://www.mumsnet.com/talk/parenting>

NHS Info - <https://www.nhs.uk>

Charities

Backup - <https://www.backuptrust.org.uk/spinal-cord-injury>

REMAP - <https://remap.org.uk/>

Scope UK - <https://www.scope.org.uk/>

Spokz - <https://www.spokz.co.uk/>

Spokz People - <https://spokzpeople.org.uk/>

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About SIA

Spinal Injuries Association (SIA) is the UK's leading charity for everyone affected by spinal cord injury. We provide free, specialist support to help you navigate the mental and physical challenges you may face now and throughout your life.

Our nationwide team can connect you with our trusted network of experts and partners, offering guidance on legal matters, care, housing, finance, mental health and more. You can reach our support line on **0800 980 0501**.

We are the voice of people with spinal cord injury. Through our expertise we can connect you to the services and organisations you need through our network for all. Join the SIA community for free at www.spinal.co.uk

Tell us what you think

If you have any comments about our publications, you can email academy@spinal.co.uk

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