

Developing a birth plan

PREGNANCY TIPS AND ARTICLES

ARTICLE

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Plan the details of your childbirth to ensure you make the best and safest options for your child, as well as get the best support from your doctor and family.

Remember that labour and birth are unpredictable and don't always go to plan.

There are many questions about labour and delivery that you will want to ask yourself – and your doctor – weeks before the onset of labour. You have a lot of choices to make about the process.

Be sure to discuss all of the following issues with your doctor:

1. What type of delivery – vaginal or caesarean (surgical removal of the child through the abdomen) – is expected?
2. In what position would you like to deliver?
3. What health care providers will be with you during the birth? How many other women will they be caring for at the same time?
4. How many other people can you have with you during your stay?
5. Will you be able to discuss the need for an episiotomy (a minor surgical procedure that can help ease the delivery) beforehand?

You will also want to discuss your feelings about pain relief and what methods you prefer. Do you want as little or as much pain management as possible? You should also tell your doctor what procedures you don't want to have under any circumstances for yourself and your child.

Including your partner

As you prepare for giving birth, you will need to consider your partner's role. Many partners want to participate in their child's birth. Even if your partner doesn't want to be involved in the delivery, he can

1. Do things to distract you during labour

2. Time your contractions
3. Rub your back
4. Act as a focal point and breathe with you during contractions
5. Offer comfort and encouragement

Writing a birth plan

A birth plan is a written record of what you would like to happen when you are in labour and just after your child's birth.

How to get it right

- Your maternity unit may have a special form you can use, or you may find space to write it in your maternity notes
- Talk to your partner and think through all your options carefully
- Discuss your ideas with your doctor – this will give you a chance to ask any questions.
- Remember that what goes into your birth plan is also dependent on your medical history and what is available at your maternity unit

What to include

- Where you would like to have your child
- Who will be your birth partner(s)
- How you would like your child to be monitored (with a belt or with a hand-held device)
- Whether or not you would like to stay mobile
- What equipment you may like to use, such as beanbags or a birthing mat
- What pain relief you would like to have
- Whether you want to labour and/or deliver your child in water
- How you feel about having an episiotomy (a cut to the skin between your vagina and anus)
- What positions you would like to use for labour and birth
- Whether you have any special needs, such as a special diet
- Whether you would like to hold your child as soon as they are born or let them be cleaned up first
- Who will cut the cord (Cutting of cord will be done either by the spouse or doctor).
- Whether you want a Syntometrine injection after the birth (this helps to prevent bleeding from the womb)???
- Whether you want your child to have vitamin K after the birth (to help with blood clotting)

- How you want to feed your child

Remember that labour and birth are unpredictable and don't always go to plan. It's important to be flexible and not to be too disappointed if you aren't able to follow your birth plan to the letter.

