



Things to Think About for the Birth of Your Baby

What to Talk about With Your Provider

A vaginal birth is the safest way to deliver most babies. The possibility of a first birth by Cesarean (birth by surgery) is important. You should discuss this possibility with your health care provider during your pregnancy. A Cesarean birth can affect you, your baby, and future pregnancies. It is important for you to talk to your health care provider. Talk about any concerns you may have about the birth.

You can use the following information and questions as a guide to talk to your health care provider.



Your Baby's Due Date

Early in pregnancy, your health care provider gave you a due date for your baby. A due date for your baby is not the same as a due date for things like bills. The due date is the best estimate of when your baby will be born. Your health care provider usually uses one or both of the following to estimate your baby's age:

- Your last menstrual period (sometimes called LMP)
- Ultrasound

Babies are rarely born on their due dates. Most babies are born between three weeks before and two weeks after their due dates.

Questions to ask my provider:

- When is my due date?*
- What is a safe range of dates for my baby's birth?*
- What happens if I go past my due date?*



Labor

In most cases, you will go into labor naturally. We don't know what causes labor. A lot of changes take place in your baby and you at the end of pregnancy. These changes could cause your body or your baby's body to make hormones (chemicals) that let your uterus know it's time to start labor.

Questions to ask my provider:

- How will I know if I'm in labor?*
- When should I call you?*
- How long does labor take?*
- Am I at risk for problems during labor?*



Benefits of Labor

Labor gives your baby's lungs time to get ready for birth. Babies who go through labor are less likely to have problems with breathing.

Questions to ask my provider:

- How does labor help my baby's breathing?*
- How else does labor help my baby?*

Induction of Labor

Induction of labor is a way to get labor started. Sometimes health care providers have to do things to get labor started. Sometimes women have problems that can't be treated until the baby is born. Other times, health care providers have to get the baby delivered to help it.

Questions to ask my provider:

- Why would I need an induction?*
- What happens in an induction?*
- What are the benefits of an induction?*
- What are the risks of an induction?*



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Support during Labor

Support can help you cope with labor and birth. Good coping can improve your chance of having a vaginal birth and lower the chance you will need a Cesarean birth. Family, friends, nurses, and midwives can also support you. Some women use a doula, or labor coach, to help them during labor. A doula is a non-medical person who supports a woman and her partner. It is important that your support person understands and cares for you and stays with you during labor and birth.

Questions to ask my provider:

Who should support me during labor and birth?
How many support people can stay with me during labor and birth?
Have you worked with doulas? Can you suggest one for me?

Questions to ask my support person:

Do you know what to expect during labor and birth?
Can we talk about what I expect for labor and birth?
Are you willing to learn how to support me during labor and birth?
Will you stay with me during labor and birth?



Cesarean Birth

At some point, your care provider may tell you that a Cesarean birth is safest for you and your baby. Before making the recommendation, your provider may think about:

- your health
- the health of your baby
- the risk of a vaginal birth to you or your baby

Sometimes a provider may know early in pregnancy that a Cesarean birth is the safest way to deliver the baby. Most often the provider won't know until labor begins. It is important for you to understand why your health care provider recommends a Cesarean birth.

Questions to ask my provider:

How can I avoid a Cesarean birth?
Why should I have a Cesarean birth?
How will I know if I should have a Cesarean birth?
Are there other options?
What are the risks of a Cesarean birth to me?
What are the risks of a Cesarean birth to my baby?



A final word

Going into labor naturally can take a lot of patience and time, but is well worth the time and the effort for both you and your baby!

For more information, see: familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/pregnancy-newborns/labor-childbirth.html
http://www.acog.org/For_Patients
<http://www.mymidwife.org/Labor-and-Birth-What-to-Expect>.