



# YOUR BIRTH, *your way*

HOW A BIRTH PLAN CAN HELP YOU PREPARE FOR DELIVERY



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Whether it's your first child or your fourth, an important part of preparing for labor and delivery is creating a birth plan. A birth plan helps communicate your preferences to your clinician and hospital care team.

Bring your birth plan to a prenatal visit so your clinician can understand your desires for labor and birth. "When you're working to create a birth plan, especially if you're a first-time parent, gather as much information as you can," says **Eric Locher, MD**, a Park Nicollet Ob/Gyn doctor. "Think about what's important to you. Attend prenatal classes to learn about your options – ask questions and make sure you understand your choices for labor and delivery."

## WELCOMING BABY TO THE WORLD

Those first moments as a new parent are filled with emotion – and you won't be thinking about all the little details once you lay eyes on your baby. Your birth plan can outline your care preferences for your newborn, from who cuts the cord and when, to whether you plan to breast or bottle feed.

You'll also want to make decisions in advance about vaccinations and medications for your baby, as well as circumcision if you're having a boy. Other considerations include who can visit, pacifier use and in-hospital photography.

## GETTING COMFORTABLE

Finding ways to be as comfortable as possible during labor is a top priority for most expectant parents. Since comfort is such an individual preference, identify what helps you relax, and plan for that. Think about whether you'd like to labor in the tub or shower, what music you want playing and how much light you want in your room. You may want to bring some comforts from home: a cozy robe, a blanket, pillows or other personal possessions that make you feel more at ease.

Pain management is another important consideration. Some women want to be offered pain medicine right away and some don't even want it to be mentioned during labor, while others prefer to wait and see how they feel at the time. In addition to pain medicine, you'll want to consider how you feel about other drugs, such as those used to help labor progress.

## BE FLEXIBLE

As long as your labor and birth is uncomplicated, there are many aspects of the process that can be adjusted to your preferences. While most of the time labor and birth is normal, it can be unpredictable. It's important to remember that a birth plan doesn't guarantee a type of labor and delivery outcome – in the end the health of you and your baby are your care team's top priority.

"I like to think of the birth plan as 'birth wishes' or 'birth preferences' since things may ultimately be different than planned or expected," says **Amy Knox, CNM**, a Park Nicollet midwife. "I encourage my patients to bring to labor an understanding of what they hope for and also flexibility. It's important for women to be kind and non-judgmental toward themselves throughout the labor process."

Photography by Liz Banfield