

BIRTH PLAN FOR:

MY TEAM:

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EARLY LABOR
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WHEN CONSIDERING A BIRTH PLAN

You will inevitably feel you ran out of room here but, like a resume, when writing a birth plan keeping it brief and bulleted is key. Mid-labor no one is going to take the time to read your 3-page opinion about pain management; they just want to know what they can give you! You will go over this plan with your doctor or midwife before labor so bullet points will suffice here as a reference to your discussion or in case someone different is present for your delivery.

MY TEAM

This is where you will outline whom you want with you during labor and immediately after. This includes your husband, a doula, mother, etc. It is important to think about this beforehand so you don't get "strong-armed" into letting more people into the room than you feel comfortable with.

PRE AND EARLY LABOR PREFERENCES

Depending on your practitioner they may have different ideas regarding when you will come to the hospital. In Australia and Scotland (where I had my first two children) you need not rush in simply because your water broke. You were given 24 hours to begin labor naturally before any interventions were considered. However, in the US many doctors encourage you to come in immediately if your water has broken even if you are not having contractions.

Consider: **(a)** when you want to come into the hospital, **(b)** the option of going back home if you are not far along, **(c)** if you want to eat and drink during early labor, **(d)** if you wish for your labor to progress naturally and without artificial encouragement by drugs or sweeps, and **(e)** if you wish to be mobile and able to move freely.

Anything else pertaining to the time before labor really gets underway, include here.

MONITORING BABY'S HEART RATE

If you and the baby are determined to be doing fine, you can choose between continuous electronic fetal monitoring or intermittent. Intermittent would mean at regular intervals they hook you up to test the baby, then you are free to move again. Continuous would require you to be hooked up to the machines continuously, which would prevent free movement.

PAIN RELIEF WISHES

Here is where you will explain your desired pain interventions. If you are going natural, you will explain you wish to proceed without any intervention if and until absolutely necessary or if unforeseen circumstances occur.

Conversely, if you prefer an epidural, massage, breathing techniques, shower, labor ball, hot/cold therapy, etc. Research the various methods available to you and have an idea of what you'd be okay with taking/not taking and write it explicitly. A laboring woman should not be deciding what she prefers when she is mid-contraction. She won't think clearly and will end up having her decisions made for her.

AMENITIES / PROPS DURING LABOR

If you want to use the birthing stool, pool, birthing chair, squatting bar, etc. here is where you will list that. Note if you want to be able to walk freely, take showers, or eat.

Feel free to list your preferences for the room if you have any. Dimmed lights, quiet or conversely bright lights and music. Whatever makes you the most comfortable will inevitably be to your benefit.

SPEEDING UP LABOR

Often doctors attempt to "speed up" your labor if it isn't progressing quickly. This is not necessary and, if you prefer, you can veto it unless absolutely necessary.

Alternately, if you are not adverse to Pitocin or other interventions to speed up labor then you may say so here. Doctors will appreciate knowing in advance what your preference is.

TIME TO PUSH

In this section list your pushing position preferences if you have any. Sitting up, squatting, semi-reclining, hands and knees, etc. If perhaps the way you have researched and feel most comfortable is new for the doctor, it will help them to know in advance your intentions.

Also, indicate if you want to be able to push of your own accord and method or if you would like them to guide and coach you as to when and for how long you push. Different birthing methods can call for different ways. Your doctor will be able to coach you directly if that is your choice.

AT TIME OF DELIVERY

Here list whether you'd like to **(a)** see the baby born with use of a mirror, **(b)** decline an episiotomy unless absolutely necessary, **(c)** touch the baby's head as it crowns, and **(d)** have the room be as quiet as possible.

THIRD STAGE

The third stage of labor is where you pass the placenta. You can either elect to do this naturally (which may take up to 45 minutes) or you can take Pitocin to speed it up. Decide beforehand so the doctors can have the Pitocin ready if that's your wish.

IMMEDIATELY POSTPARTUM

Here you'll want to consider the following: **(a)** if you want your partner to cut the umbilical cord, **(b)** whether you will immediately breastfeed your baby after initial testing is done, **(c)** if you prefer your baby to stay in the room with you at all times, **(d)** cord blood banking and whether you want to do this or not, and **(e)** if you want to walk to your new room or go in a wheelchair (walking is so fun if you've gone natural!).

IMPORTANT EXTRAS

Here it would be helpful to add anything that your caregiver would need to know about you, such as **(a)** health concerns, **(b)** complications from previous pregnancies, **(c)** allergies, and **(d)** religious traditions or considerations. Anything that doesn't fit nicely somewhere else, note it here.

FEEDING PLANS

Let your caregiver know if you plan to breastfeed or bottle feed. Breastfeeding mothers will want to say that doctors are not to offer formula, water, a pacifier etc. to the baby without their consent.

DISCHARGE WISHES

Depending upon various factors during labor and delivery, you may be able to return home much sooner than you think. In Scotland the rule was 6 hours if you were healthy, gave birth naturally and wanted to go home. Australia suggested I stay one evening, but I was free to leave the next day. Whether you deliver naturally, with pain medication, or after having had a c-section will affect your release date, but you are able to list your preferences here.