

BIRTHING NATURALLY'S  
LABOR PLANNING GUIDE



---

## BIRTHING NATURALLY'S LABOR PLANNING GUIDE

---

In this document you will find a collection of information about birth plans and forms to help you organize your thoughts, goals and preferences for your baby's birth. Every family is different, and each labor plan should reflect the unique needs of the family who created it. Print the pages you want to use, leave the ones that will not serve the needs of your family.

---

### HOW DO I WRITE A BIRTH PLAN?

---

The first step in writing a birth plan is to find out what your options are. Different doctors will give you different options for handling the same situation. Different hospitals will give you different options and have different policies. Differences in health between pregnancies can impact the options that are available.

Your first job is to find out what options are available to you. If you are not sure yet what possible options might be, review the Birth Plan Options sheet. It is an exhaustive list of options you might have. It is a good tool for beginning conversations with your caregiver too. Read through the list and determine what options appeal to you, and what options you do not think you want. You can find more information about any of the options listed at the Birthing Naturally website.

Take the Birth Plan Options Worksheet on a hospital tour to find out how the policies may affect your options. If possible, make several copies and tour several hospitals. You may find that some hospitals appeal to you more based on the services they provide.

Once you know what options are available to you, it is important to determine how you feel about the options. Some things will be very important, and others will seem small or unimportant. There is no right or wrong, it is simply a matter of understanding who you are and how you want things handled.

You may find that there are several options that you feel very strongly about. In this case, it might be necessary to try to decide how the options rank in importance to you. The Ideal Birth Worksheet can help you work through your feelings about the options.

After you have decided what you want, you need to take a hard look at the reality of your situation. Are the choices you have made realistic given your health? Does your caregiver and hospital support your decisions? Do your birth partners (doula, spouse, friend, family) support your decisions?

If you have made choices that are not possible you need to reevaluate your decisions. Do you need to change your plan, or do you need to change your care team. Can you increase the support for your choices by changing hospitals or midwives? Or would you prefer to change your decision about the options and stay with the practice, hospital and birth partners you have chosen. Only you can make that decision.

With your choices written out, talk with your doctor or midwife about what choices you have made and why. If your caregiver has concerns about an option, find out what they are and where she recommends you go to do further study. Be sure to be assertive, but not aggressive when discussing your options. Do not allow your caregiver to brush off your decisions or suggest that

this is unimportant. At the same time, do not assume your caregiver will be hostile or uninterested in hearing what you have to say.

Talk first about how you want to handle a normal, uncomplicated labor. Then move on to your decisions in case of a complication. Be sure to let your caregiver share thoughts and opinions about your decisions. Listen carefully to what is said. This will be your first real chance to determine if this is the doctor/midwife for you.

Once you have a good idea what you want on your birth plan, its time to write it out in a easy to read one page document. Remember that your goal is to share your feelings and wishes, so write it in a manner that makes nurses, doctors and other staff want to read your birth plan.

- Use bullet points rather than paragraphs – they are easier to read
- Put your highest priorities at the top
- If you have no opinion about something, just leave it off your birth plan
- You may want to write a paragraph of introduction at the top giving names of people who will be with you and the atmosphere you would like.

It is not necessary to make a plan for every situation. Think general – not specific. For example “We would like the opportunity to discuss any decision before agreeing to a procedure” or “It is important to us to have a vaginal birth, please give us every opportunity to try.”

Just a note on interactive internet birth plans, be sure to re-type them. Coming in with a document printed from a website gives the impression that you just happened across the idea of birth planning and thought you would give it a try. A personal written birth pan gives the impression that you researched your options and are firm on your decisions.

When you have it written and proof-read, make about a dozen copies. Give one to your caregiver (or every caregiver in the office) to put in your file. Give one to the hospital when you pre-register. Keep several copies in your labor bag, and keep one or two in your purse or wallet just in case you do not have time to go home and get your labor bag.

At the hospital give copies to everyone, especially the nurse who is admitting you. Hospital staff can be very accommodating and helpful when they know what you want.

Remember, you did not write the birth plan for the normal, uncomplicated labor. You wrote it so that those attending you understood your decisions about how to handle unexpected situations. When an unexpected situation arises, remind your caregivers to refer to your birth plan and work together through the plan you wrote. Some women get to do EVERYTHING on their birth plan. They get to try every position and pain relief technique and when complications arise, they get to have a cesarean done the way they wanted. Other women get to do very LITTLE from their birth pan. The nurse keeps the right atmosphere, but labor moves so quickly that you don't get a chance to try the tub and walk the halls. Regardless of the circumstances of your labor, use your birth plan to determine how you will react to labor.



## FORM DESCRIPTIONS

---

**BIRTH PLANNING CHECK SHEET:** Use this form to keep track of the information you gather about birth options. As you read through it the first time, make note of any options you need more information about. After gathering more information, check off the options you are most interested in having for your labor. Use this completed check sheet when discussing the available options with your midwife, the birth center or hospital and any other support persons.

**UNDERSTANDING YOUR BODY:** Use this form to help figure out what types of comfort techniques are most likely to be successful for you. Take your time to complete the form, then share your answers with your support team so they understand what type of assistance you will need.

**PERFECT BIRTH EXERCISE:** Use this form to help organize your thoughts about giving birth. There is no right or wrong here, simply answer the questions based on your ideal birth situation. As you work through the questions on this form, consider what fears you may need to explore and what areas of concern you still need to address.

**PREVIOUS BIRTH QUESTIONNAIRE:** For families who have experienced birth previously, reviewing the experience with this worksheet can help you organize your thoughts in an easy to share format. This information will not only be valuable as you plan your baby's birth, but also to your midwife so she can ensure you have the necessary support and assistance.



**INDUCTION PLAN:** For families who are considering the option of an induction, the induction plan worksheet ensures you have gathered all the necessary information to make an informed decision. Work with your midwife to complete this form.

**PAIN COPING PLAN:** Ensuring you understand your pain coping options will improve your satisfaction with the methods you select. Gather the information needed to complete this form through books, internet and discussions with your midwife. It may be necessary to print two or three copies of this form, since many families approach pain management with a plan A and plan B mentality.

**PACKING YOUR BIRTH BAG:** This check sheet can help you manage the task of packing for an out of home birth, or organize your materials for an at home birth.

**GETTING YOUR BABY TO TURN:** This form is a listing of activities families have tried to help a baby change positions. Though no technique is guaranteed, the more options you have, the greater the likelihood of finding a method that will work for your baby.

Need more help? Additional information is always available at <http://www.birthingnaturally.net>. Best wishes for a safe, satisfying childbirth experience.

# BIRTHING NATURALLY

## Birth Planning Check Sheet

---

This worksheet is designed to help you organize your thoughts about various options while you plan for giving birth. Use this list to help you investigate your options and keep track of which ones are best for your labor. You do not need to include everything in a written birth plan, only include those issues about which you have a preference.

### Starting or Speeding Labor

- Spontaneous  Up to 42 weeks  Beyond 42 weeks
- Self induced  Walk  Enema  Castor Oil  Nipple Stimulation  Thumb Sucking  Accupressure
- Medically induced  Prostaglandin gel  IV Pitocin  Amniotomy  Cytotec

### Monitoring Labor

- Intermittent  Fetoscope  Doptone  External Monitor  Telemetry
- Continuous  External Monitor  Internal Monitor  Telemetry

### Hydration

- IV Fluids  Heparin Lock  NPO (No liquids by mouth)
- Clear Liquids  Popsicles  Ice Chips  Lollipops  Broth  Tea  Sodas
- According to Thirst  Limited to clear liquids  No limit

### Pain Relief

- Relaxation Techniques  Breathing  Imagery/ Visualization  Focal Point  Massage  Vocalization
- Narcotic  Only if requested  Offer as soon as possible
- Epidural / Spinal  As soon as possible  When requested  "Walking" or light administration

### Comfort Items and Techniques

- Environment  Lighting  Temperature  Sounds/Music  Fresh Air  Own clothing/bedding
- Water  Labor Tub  Birth Pool  Shower
- Massage Tools  Tennis Ball  Rolling Pin  Heating Pad  Ice Pack  Lotion

### Positions

- Upright  Walking  Lunging  Leaning on wall/person  Sitting on ball  Rocking Chair
- Hands and Knees  With Ball  On Bed  Pelvic Rocking  Chest to Floor
- Reclining  On side  Recliner Chair

### Pushing

- Positions  Squatting  Standing  Hands and Knees  Reclining
- Duration  Spontaneous  Directed  Prolonged
- Perineal Care  Support  Massage  Compresses  Positioning  Episiotomy

### Cesarean

- Support  Partner  Doula  Family Members
- Anesthesia  Epidural  Spinal  General
- Environment  Describe Events  Video/Photos  Baby and mom together for recovery

### Baby Care

- Cord Cutting  Partner  Mother  Family Members  Wait until stops pulsing
- Temperature Regulation  Mother's Abdomen  Warming Unit
- Newborn Care  Delay Procedures  Vaccinations  Circumcision  First Bath  Copy of Footprints
- Nursery  Rooming In  Partner Rooming In  Nursery on Request  Pacifier / Bottle

BIRTHING NATURALLY  
**Understanding Your Body**

---

This worksheet is designed to help you prepare for the upcoming birth by identifying the way your body handles stress and pain. You should think about all sources of stress or discomfort, physical and emotional. Think of recent situations you have been in and consider how you responded to those situations.

**I know I am feeling tense or stressed because my body...**

**My body reacts to tension by...**

**When I feel stressed, I can remain calm if I...**

**To cope with pain, I prefer...**

Be Alone	or	Be with People
Keep Myself Busy	or	Tune Into Myself
Distract my Thoughts	or	Explore my Thoughts
Be Quiet	or	Talk with Someone
To be Touched	or	To not be Touched
Have Someone Help	or	Work it out Alone

**What has been your experience with using the following stress and pain coping techniques?**

Slow Deep Breathing  
Massage  
Visualization or Meditation  
Vocalization  
Progressive Relaxation  
Using a Focus Point  
Prayer

**COMMON STRESS RESPONSES**

**Head**

Tension Headache  
Tired Eyes  
Grinding Teeth  
Clenching Jaw  
Ringing in Ears

**Neck**

Muscle Tightness  
Decreased Range of Motion

**Shoulders/Arms**

Muscle Tightness  
Trembling Hands  
Gripping Fists  
Biting Nails

**Chest**

Heart rate increasing  
Heart pounding  
Difficulty catching breath

**Stomach**

"Butterflies" in stomach  
Nausea

**Back**

Muscle Tightness  
Sore Back  
Bad Posture

**Skin**

Sweating  
Clammy skin  
Itching/Scratching

**Legs/Feet**

Bouncing Legs  
Trembling Feet  
Sore or Achy Feet  
Muscle Tension

**Mental Processes**

Speech Difficulties  
Inability to Focus  
Negative Thoughts  
Fear

# BIRTHING NATURALLY

## Perfect Birth Exercise

---

This exercise will help you sort out your thoughts and wishes about your upcoming birth experience. For this exercise, imagine you are having your perfect labor – everything works out exactly how you would want it. Remember, the answers should be about your ideal birth, not what you think others want for your birth.

**The Uncontrollable Issues** In real life, you cannot control these things, but if you could how would your labor happen?

- When and where does labor begin?
- Who is with you when labor begins?
- How strong are your contractions?
- How quickly to your contractions progress?
- How long do you push?

**The Almost Controllable Issues** There are some circumstances in labor which you might have control over or might not. It all depends on how labor works out. If you have a choice about these issues, how do they happen?

- How does your midwife assist you?
- Where do you labor?
- Where do you give birth?
- What tools do you use to cope with labor?
- Who labors with you?
- What techniques are used to help you?
- What techniques are not a part of your labor?
- What happens after the baby is born?

**The Most Important Issues** After working through the previous two lists of questions, you should begin to have an idea of what issues are most important to you. Please finish these sentences.

- My top three priorities for this birth are...
- My perfect birth place is...
- My perfect caregivers are...
- My perfect labor tools are...
- My perfect emotional support is...
- My perfect pain coping techniques are...

### SHARING YOUR GOALS

Now that you have determined what is most important to you during labor, you will need to spend some time communicating these goals with your labor team.

This may involve writing a formal birth plan, or simply having a list of items to discuss. You may want to discuss these issues during a casual get together, over the phone or at a formal meeting or appointment.

### WITH WHOM DO YOU NEED TO SHARE YOUR GOALS?

- Partner
- Family Members
- Friends
- Children
- Midwife/Doctor
- Doula
- Birth Center Staff
- Hospital Staff
- Parents

BIRTHING NATURALLY

## Previous Birth Questionnaire

---

This worksheet is designed to help you prepare for the upcoming birth by working through your previous birth experience. Answering the following questions will give you the opportunity to reflect on the events as they occurred, and your reactions to them. Through this time of reflection you should gain an awareness of the areas which are most important to you so you can clearly articulate them to others. Make your answers as short or long as necessary, you may find it helpful to answer all the questions quickly, then come back to the questionnaire a few days later to answer them more in depth.

**Remembering the whole process of your previous birth:  
What do you feel went right?**

**What do you feel went wrong?**

**Do you feel you had adequate pain relief?**

**Do you feel you had adequate time to make decisions?**

**How do you feel about your choice of birth place?**

**How do you feel about your choice of birth attendant?**

**How do you feel about who was with you during labor?**

**How do you feel about the start of labor?**

**How soon did you see, hold and nurse your baby?**

**Were you and your baby healthy?**

**How do you feel about your recovery time?**

**In what ways would you like this labor to be different?**

**How do you feel as you look forward to this baby's birth?**

### EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

Women experience a wide variety of emotions before, during and after giving birth. Choose the emotions that you felt the most strongly.

Acceptance

Alarm

Anger

Anticipation

Apathy

Bitter

Depressed

Delighted

Disappointed

Doubtful

Elation

Ecstasy

Embarrassment

Fear

Frustration

Gratitude

Grief

Guilt

Happiness

Hope

Hurt

Inadequate

Joy

Jealousy

Loneliness

Love

Mighty

Modest

Nervous

Patient

Peace

Pride

Regret

Relief

Shame

Sorrow

Thrilled

Worry

# BIRTHING NATURALLY

## Induction Plan

---

The decision to artificially begin labor is one of the most drastic ways to alter the normal course of labor. This worksheet will help you plan for your potential induction by investigating your options, your desired outcomes and your likelihood of success. Being prepared can help make your induction, should you decide to have one, a positive experience.

### I think I should/should not be induced because...

### I will be induced by...

- Natural Methods
- Artificial Rupture of Membranes
- Prostaglandin gel
- Artificial Oxytocin
- Prostaglandin tablet

### My likelihood of success is...

The Bishop's Score is an estimation of the likelihood your induction will be successful at starting labor. The higher your score, the more likely your induction will succeed. Recent research suggests dilation alone is a strong indicator of the potential success.

	Score			
	0	1	2	3
Position	Posterior	Middle	Anterior	N/A
Consistency	Firm	Medium	Soft	N/A
Effacement	<30%	40-50%	60-70%	>80%
Dilation	0 cm	1-2 cm	3-4 cm	>5 cm
Station	-3	-2	-1	>+1

### If the first attempt at induction is not successful, my backup plan is to...

### Based on the hospital I will be using and the circumstances of my induction, my induction plan...

- Allows me to eat
- Allows me to drink
- Allows me to have time off the monitor
- Allows me to be mobile
- Allows me to use the shower or tub
- Allows me to rest at night and begin again the next morning
- Allows me to go home if unsuccessful after 24 hours
- Allows me to become more aggressive if initially unsuccessful
- Allows me to use pain medication when I want it

### IMPORTANT FACTS

#### Overdue?

When induction is routine at 41 weeks, 1 fetal death will be prevented for 500 inductions.

#### Potential Big Baby?

There is no accurate way to measure the size of a baby before birth. You are as likely to have problems of the baby not fitting without being measured "large."

#### Diabetes?

50% of babies who have shoulder dystocia will be born to women without diabetes.

#### Tired of being pregnant?

Changes occurring during the last days of pregnancy help your child breathe, maintain body temperature and fight off illness.

#### Baby Not Thriving?

There is currently no standard by which to compare normal fetal growth.

#### Membrane Rupture?

There is a 15% false positive rate on the test. 90% of women whose water has broke will give birth within 48 hours.

#### High Blood Pressure?

Overall, mild PIH has very little risk for mother and baby.

Source: The Guide to Effective Care in Pregnancy and Childbirth

# BIRTHING NATURALLY

## Pain Coping Plan

---

You have many options for how you manage the discomfort or pain you feel during labor. Every option has its own set of benefits and risks. Your task will be to choose the methods that allow you to cope with labor while adding the least amount of risk to the labor. This worksheet will help you review your choices so you can ensure you are prepared to cope during labor

### My plan to cope with pain is to:

#### I expect this method to:

- Remove all pain
- Remove most pain
- Remove a little pain
- Remove anxiety/stress
- Don't know what I expect

#### This method is:

- Usually successful at relieving pain
- Often successful at relieving pain
- Sometimes successful at relieving pain
- Don't know how effective it is

#### The risk of this method are:

- It may not work
- It may slow down labor
- It may not be available when I am in labor
- It can affect my baby by: \_\_\_\_\_
- It can affect me by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know the risks

#### I know this method:

- Allows me to eat
- Allows me to drink
- Allows me to change positions
- Allows me to have time off the monitor
- Allows me to be mobile
- Allows me to use the shower or tub
- Allows me to rest
- Allows me to try something else if not successful
- Don't know what I can do with this method

#### If this method does not work, I will:

### PAIN COPING STRATEGIES

#### Environment

Keep the environment as comfortable and relaxing as possible.

#### Relaxation

May include breathing techniques, meditation, prayer, and other relaxation exercises.

#### Touch

Using massage and pressure to help stay comfortable.

#### Water

Spending time in either the tub or a shower.

#### Movement

Changing positions in response to your bodies signals.

#### Tranquilizers

Induce sleep, do not provide pain relief.

#### Narcotics

Given as a shot or in an IV, can reduce the sensation of pain.

#### Epidural

Medication placed in the back to prevent painful sensations.

# BIRTHING NATURALLY

## Packing your Birth Bag

---

In addition to the bag of clothes and baby things you pack to bring to your birth place, you may want to pack a bag of helpful labor supplies. In this bag you would keep anything you think might be helpful for you during labor. This worksheet will help you identify some of the tools you already have available, and the tools you would like to get. For discussion of ways to use these tools, please visit [www.birthingnaturally.net](http://www.birthingnaturally.net).

### Positioning Items

- Birth Ball
- Pool Noodle
- Large Pillows
- Kneeling Pad
- Rebozo
- Small stool
- Birth Pool

### Comforting Items

- Hot Sock
- Massage Oil
- Massage Tools
- Ice Packs (or frozen water bottles)
- Selection of music and a way to play it
- Aromatherapy Oil
- Small Fan
- Tennis Balls
- Items such as pictures for focus
- Water bottle or juice boxes
- Shower

### Personal Care Items

- Gloves
- Washcloths (for cooling or heating)
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Lip balm
- Headache medicine
- Sweater or sweatshirt
- Complete change of clothes
- Book to read
- Hairbrush and supplies

### Techniques to Know

- Massage
- Nipple Stimulation
- Positioning for Labor
- Vocalization
- Hip Squeeze
- Abdominal or Patterned Breathing
- Perineal Massage
- Relaxation Methods

### PACK FOUR BAGS

Even if you plan to give birth at home, "packing" puts all the items you want available in one easy to locate place. You may find having four bags gives you the ability to quickly find what you are looking for:

#### **BAG ONE: LABOR**

In the first bag, pack the tools you would like to have available during labor. Keep a list of last minute things you don't want to forget such as a special pillow or frozen water bottles from the kitchen.

#### **BAG TWO: PARTNER**

Pack a separate bag with items your labor partners may need such as a change of clothes, snacks, money for lunch, list of phone numbers, camera and breath mints.

#### **BAG THREE: BABY**

You can pack anything you might want to have available for baby in your new diaper bag.

#### **BAG FOUR: MOM**

You can pack the items you would like to have after baby is born, like change of clothes, in a separate bag. This way, you don't have to carry everything into the birth place at once.

## BIRTHING NATURALLY

# Getting your Baby to Turn

---

If you know your baby is in a position that is likely to make birth more difficult or risky, you do have options for ways to get baby to move. It is important to remember that babies move before and during labor. This means success at moving baby before labor begins will not necessarily mean your baby will stay in that position for birth. It is also important to remember that babies choose their position for many reasons. While some babies may seem “stuck” in a position that is not optimal, there may be real reasons the baby needs to be born in that position.

### **Begin with good posture...**

Pay attention to how you sit, stand and move. Are you slumping over your belly, crowding your baby into a bad position? Are you flopping backwards, folding your baby over? Sit and stand tall with your head and shoulders held comfortably high. Draw your pelvis into proper alignment as if you are pulling the pubic bone up – do not let your pelvis hang so it restricts your baby’s access to your pelvis. Keep your pelvic floor toned so your baby’s head will flex properly. You may find using good posture allows your baby to move into the proper position.

### **Move the pelvis higher than the chest...**

If your baby is still reluctant to move into a good birth position, spend some time relaxing in a knee-chest position. Kneel on the floor, then slowly bring your head and shoulders down to the floor in front of you while keeping your hips in the air. In this position gravity can help pull your baby’s head off your pelvis to give him a bit more room to change positions.

### **Get moving...**

Go for several short walks each day. Spend some time rocking and swaying your pelvis like a belly dancer. Side to side and front to back rocking is good. Hip circles and figure eights are better, especially in a knee-chest position. The more you move your hips, the easier you make it for your baby to get into an optimal birth position.

### **Go asymmetrical...**

When trying to get your baby to line up properly, it can help to move your pelvis in asymmetrical ways. Walk up stairs two at a time. Putting one foot on a short stool or chair and lunging towards that foot can be helpful. Kneel with one knee down and one knee up (foot on the floor) while rocking or swaying your pelvis. Keep one foot on a stool while you sit or stand.

### **Exaggerate gravity...**

Try exaggerated versions of the knee-chest position. Place an ironing board so it lies from the couch to the floor and then carefully lie on the board so your head is lower than your hips. Crawl down a flight of stairs or rock across the top of a birth ball. (Be sure to have assistance with any of these positions).

### ADDITIONAL THINGS TO TRY

#### **Light**

Shine a flashlight near your pubic bone to get a breech or transverse baby to move towards the light.

#### **Sound**

Have someone “talk” to baby with the mouth near mom’s pubic bone to get a breech or transverse baby to move towards the sound.

#### **Ice**

Hold a piece of ice on mom’s belly near the baby’s head to encourage baby to move away from the ice.

#### **Swimming**

Swimming may allow enough pelvic flexibility for your baby to change positions.

#### **Massage**

Your massage therapist may be familiar with massage techniques to encourage your baby to move into an optimal position.

#### **Chiropractic Alignment**

Your Chiropractor may be familiar with techniques to encourage your baby to move into an optimal position.

#### **External Version**

Your midwife may be willing to attempt to force your baby to move into a better birth position by pushing on your abdomen.