

What is a birth plan?

A birth plan is a document you create which is used to tell your health care provider(s) your wishes for labour, birth, and early postpartum. It can also give instructions on how you would like you and your baby to be cared for after their birth.

The goal of a birth plan is for your care providers to be able to quickly identify your preferences. You generally record what you want to ideally have happen or what you would prefer if things do not go according to plan.

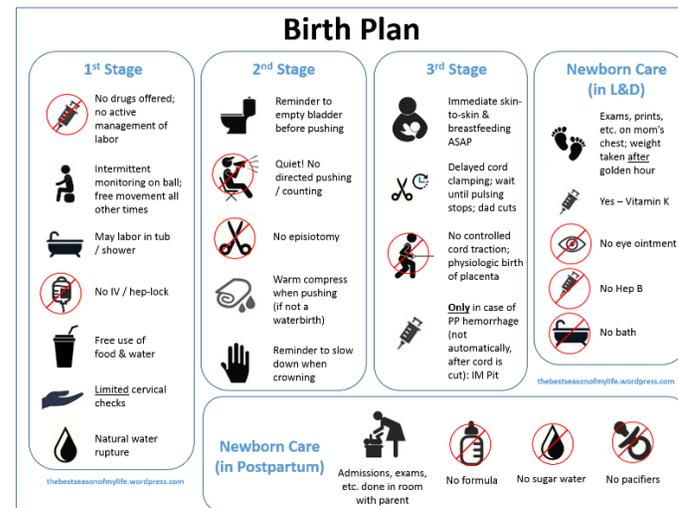
Each labour and birth is unique. *Not everything can be planned for and not everything goes exactly to plan.* It is helpful to remain flexible and expect that unforeseen circumstances may necessitate a change in your birth plans. If a change in the birth plan is necessary, your health care providers will attempt to follow your plan as closely as is possible.

“We must bend in the wind sometimes, for so much is beyond our control.”

How do I create a birth plan?

Your birth plan can be as simple or intricate as you wish. Some people prefer to have a formal plan on recorded on paper. Some prefer to write out birth plans, some create pictographic plans (see below), while others will have nothing formally written down.

Ideally, a physical birth plan should be clear, concise, and fit on one page.



1 st Stage	2 nd Stage	3 rd Stage	Newborn Care (in L&D)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No drugs offered; no active management of labor Intermittent monitoring on ball; free movement all other times May labor in tub / shower No IV / hep-lock Free use of food & water Limited cervical checks Natural water rupture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reminder to empty bladder before pushing Quiet! No directed pushing / counting No episiotomy Warm compress when pushing (if not a waterbirth) Reminder to slow down when crowning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediate skin-to-skin & breastfeeding ASAP Delayed cord clamping; wait until pulsing stops; dad cuts No controlled cord traction; physiologic birth of placenta Only in case of PP hemorrhage (not automatically, after cord is cut): IM Pit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exams, prints, etc. on mom's chest; weight taken after golden hour Yes - Vitamin K No eye ointment No Hep B No bath
<p>Newborn Care (in Postpartum)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions, exams, etc. done in room with parent No formula No sugar water No pacifiers 			

What should I consider for my birth plan?

Type of Birth

Are you planning a vaginal birth? Caesarian section?



Are you planning a hospital or home birth?



Do you want to labour as much as you can at home? Or do you want to be in the hospital as soon as you are able?

If you are planning a homebirth – are you planning a water birth?



Presence & Support

Who would you like to support you? Most people wish their partner to be present with them. Some may want their birthing parent. Some people hire doulas. Ideally who you choose to support you should be focused on you and attentive to your needs during labour.

Are you planning on having a birth photographer or videographer present?

Would you mind if a student or learner were present (they often are an extra source of support)?



If at home, do you want your older children to be involved in the birth in some capacity?

Environment

What do you want your birthing environment to be like? Dim lights or bright? Maybe you want flameless candles, string lights, photos, or focus items on display? Do you want anything in the room hidden (e.g. medical equipment)?



Would you mind if people talked quietly (to you or amongst themselves)? Would you like your environment as quiet as possible? Would you like music or ambient tracks playing?

What kind of food/drink do you want available to you?

What do you want to wear during your labour?

Pain & Labour Coping

Are you planning a completely natural labour and birth? As natural as possible but open to pain management when needed? Would you like pain relief as soon as you are able to have it? Do you want your care provider to offer pain management options or do you only want pain management if you request it?



What forms of pain relief would you like/not like? It is a good idea to research and discuss pain management options with your care provider prenatally!

Labouring and Pushing

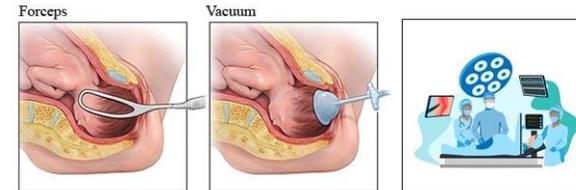
You often don't know what position you will want to labour or push in until you are in the process of doing so. Most people will push on their back or side. Some will push on their hands and knees, a birthing stool, standing, or sitting on the toilet.



Pushing can be directed by a care provider which can be hands on or off or can be solely verbal encouragement. You may prefer one or the other or you can try both and see what works!

Unplanned Situations

Would you consider the use of forceps and/or vacuum if they were needed or offered?



If you required an unplanned Caesarian section, who would you like to accompany you into the operating room? Do you want your baby to be skin-to-skin with you or wrapped up with your partner?

If baby needs to go to the NICU or special care nursery – do you want your partner to accompany baby or stay with you?

When Baby Is Born

Would you like your baby placed immediately on your chest? Would you like them skin to skin with you, or with your partner?



Do you wish to delay the clamping of your baby's cord as long as possible or wait just a couple minutes?

Who do you want to cut the baby's cord?



Placenta

In the whirlwind of having just birthed your baby, it's often forgotten that you have to deliver your placenta as well! You may prefer to have your care providers assist in its delivery or you may choose to deliver your placenta with your own pushing efforts.



Do you want to be shown your placenta afterwards?

Do you wish to keep your placenta?

Infant Feeding

Are you planning on breastfeeding, formula feeding, or a combination of both?

If this is not your first baby, did you have any issues with feeding your previous child(ren) you would like your care provider to know about?

Would you find it helpful to see a lactation consultant prenatally or after the birth?



Infant care

Would you like erythromycin eye ointment and or vitamin K given to your baby (see our section on *Infant Care*)?

If you are have a male child, are you planning a circumcision for them?

Hospital Stay

If you are planning hospital birth – how long are you planning to stay in hospital?

You may want to leave as early as possible (3-4hrs) or do you may want to stay as long as you can (24-36hrs).



Postpartum Help

It takes a village! Who is going to be minding pets or older children while you are labouring? Or helping around the house when the baby is born?

Do you think you may benefit from a postpartum doula or a mother's helper?

Other

Do you have any fears or concerns regarding childbirth you want to share with your healthcare provider?

What do you feel is most important for your care providers to know about your labour and birth plan?

Do you have a disability or circumstance that you require or prefer your care provider to accommodate?