

## How to Create and Customize Your Birth Plan



### Highlights

Birth plans can help you prepare for labour, and take an active role when you give birth.

Ask your midwife how to start preparing your birth plan.

It is normal for you to change your birth plan over the course of your pregnancy.

Think about what is important to you and include any specific things you would like to happen as well as things you'd prefer to avoid.

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### What is a Birth Plan?

A birth plan is a written document that outlines what you would like to happen during your labour and delivery. It allows you to express your preferences, helping you feel supported and ensuring that both you and your birth partner are well-prepared for the birth. A birth plan also serves as a guide for your healthcare team, letting them know how to best support you and involve you in the decision-making process surrounding the birth of your baby.

Your birth plan is not set in stone-it can evolve over the course of your pregnancy, and it is perfectly okay to change your preferences as the situation unfolds. Even in labour, you retain the right to adjust your plan as necessary.

### **Is a Birth Plan Necessary?**

Creating a birth plan is entirely optional. Some people find it helpful, while others prefer to go into the birth process with a more flexible approach. If you decide to make a birth plan, it can be a good idea to discuss your preferences with your healthcare provider. Whether you choose to write everything down or simply have an open discussion, it's important that your birth plan reflects your values and the kind of experience you hope for.

### **When Is the Right Time to Start Creating a Birth Plan?**

There is no set timeline for making a birth plan, but it's best to start thinking about it when you are far enough along in your pregnancy to have a clear idea of your preferences. This should give you ample time to discuss your thoughts with your healthcare provider and your birth partner. You may also want to consider cultural practices or personal preferences and include them in your plan.

Be sure to discuss the options that may be relevant to you based on your health and the location where you plan to give birth.

### **How Do I Begin Creating a Birth Plan?**

Begin by thinking about what matters most to you. Write down the aspects of labour and delivery that are important to you, as well as anything you would prefer to avoid. If you're unsure, talking to friends or family members who have given birth can provide useful insights. Participating in labour and birth

classes can also help clarify your preferences. Some people find techniques like Lamaze or hypnobirthing helpful, so consider exploring different methods that may suit you and your birth partner.

Try to keep your birth plan clear, concise, and simple. You may prefer using a digital format or app so you can easily share it with others. It's a good idea to keep a backup copy and make sure your healthcare provider includes it in your medical notes.

### **What Should My Birth Plan Include?**

When creating your birth plan, think about what will make you feel supported and comfortable. While it's essential to consider your preferences, it's also important to remain flexible since labour and birth do not always go as planned. Unexpected medical interventions may be necessary for your wellbeing or your baby's health.

Here are some ideas for what to include in your birth plan:

### **Who Are the Important People in Your Support Network?**

Identify the people who will be present with you during labour, such as your partner, a doula, or a family member.

### **Are There Cultural Considerations You Want to Include?**

If you have cultural practices or beliefs related to childbirth, make sure they are included in your plan.

### **Do You Want to Stay Active During Labour?**

Consider whether you want to walk, use a birth ball, or engage in other activities to help manage contractions and facilitate the process.

### **Where Would You Like to Give Birth?**

Specify your preferred birth location-whether at a hospital, a birthing centre, or at home.

## **What Positions Do You Prefer for Labour and Birth?**

Think about whether you want to give birth in an upright position, on your side, or another preferred posture.

## **Would You Like Your Healthcare Team to Offer Pain Relief Early?**

Decide if you want to explore pain relief options early in labour, such as an epidural or other methods, or if you prefer to try natural pain relief techniques first.

## **Would You Prefer Medical Intervention Over Labouring for Too Long?**

If you have concerns about prolonged labour, you might specify your preference for medical interventions, such as the use of pitocin or other interventions, to help progress the labour if needed.

## **What to Include About Your Baby After Birth:**

**Who Will Help You When You Go Home with Your Baby?** It's a good idea to consider who will help support you once you leave the hospital or birth centre, whether it's your partner, a family member, or a hired postpartum doula.

**Do You Prefer Skin-to-Skin Contact?** Many people prefer immediate skin-to-skin contact after birth, which has been shown to have numerous benefits for both the baby and the mother.

**Do You Plan to Breastfeed Your Baby?** If you intend to breastfeed, including this in your birth plan can ensure that your healthcare team supports you in achieving your breastfeeding goals.

## **Tools and Assistance**

**Pregnancy and Birth Apps** Digital tools with templates, checklists, and reminders to help create and manage your birth plan.

**Birth Plan Templates** Downloadable templates from hospitals or birthing centers to help structure your birth plan.

**Birth and Labour Classes**Classes that provide knowledge on pain management, labor positions, and creating a birth plan.

**Supportive Networks**Insights from family, friends, or online communities to help clarify your preferences.

**Consultations with Healthcare Providers**Regular check-ins with your doctor or midwife to refine your birth plan based on your health needs.

**Doula Services**Doulas provide emotional and informational support during pregnancy and labor, helping you craft your plan.

**Hospital and Birth Center Policies**Understand your hospital's policies to align your preferences with available options.

**Books and Guides**Helpful books that guide you through the process of creating a birth plan with real-life examples.