

PREPARING FOR A HOMEBIRTH

By 36 weeks gestation, you and your baby are generally safe to birth at home. Therefore, I recommend having the following on hand by the time you enter your last month of pregnancy:

Basics for Mom

- ❑ 2 clean fitted sheets, one flat (preferably old, not new good ones), in case you labor in bed
- ❑ Plastic mattress cover or other plastic (shower curtain or flannel backed tablecloth works well)
- ❑ 3 or more old washcloths for warm compresses and bathing mom
- ❑ Large cookie sheet or other tray (to put instruments on so they are portable)
- ❑ Empty laundry basket or other similar sized basket or container
- ❑ Large plastic trash bag for trash
- ❑ Large plastic trash bag or other container for soiled linens
- ❑ Flashlight – check the batteries are working!
- ❑ Hydrogen peroxide (for stain removal). Works well for carpets and laundry as well.
- ❑ Recharge or other energy drinks. The combination of sugar and caffeine is good for exhaustion.
- ❑ Energy bars (See recipe for an idea)
- ❑ Birth kit – you can order this by clicking the link on www.openarmsmidwifery.com or going directly to www.birthwithlove.com. Click on *Order a Custom Kit*. Find Open Arms Midwifery, Debbie Healy and click *Get*. You may also call Birth With Love directly at: 1-800-434-4915. This option can be faster.
- ❑ 2-3 pair comfortable underwear. Disposable underwear is available in the birth kit, though not everyone loves these.

Tub Use

- ❑ If you plan to use the birth pool: buy a non-PVC rubber hose or other food-quality hose at most hardware stores. (ACE Hardware – red rubber food grade is perfect). Make sure it is attachable to a hot water source (kitchen sink and basement faucets usually work). Turn your water heater to maximum in early labor for more rapid filling of the birth pool.
- ❑ Inexpensive hand mirror
- ❑ Extra towels

- ❑ Comfortable clothes for labor and postpartum if you wish
- ❑ Nutritional foods and teas for your first post partum days. Do some cooking in advance if possible and have meals frozen for the days to follow. If friends wish to be helpful, invite them to prepare casseroles, do laundry, help with cleaning, shopping, etc. You will need help for 2-6 weeks after the birth.

No Bake Peanut Butter Nuggets

- 1 C Peanut Butter (or other nut butter)
- ½ C Non-fat dry milk powder
- 1 C Rolled oats
- 1 t. Ground cinnamon
- ½ C Flax meal
- ½ C Honey
- Raisins or chocolate chips to taste
- Shape into balls and refrigerate

Basics for Baby

In the laundry basket or other container, place items for your baby:

- ❑ Several clean old towels
- ❑ Several receiving blankets
- ❑ Two baby hats, wool preferable
- ❑ A diaper or two
- ❑ Olive oil – to apply to their bums, helps with the meconium

Other items for baby that can be helpful:

- ❑ Thermometer
- ❑ Normal saline drops, especially for those winter babies

For the first 2 weeks

and beyond, I recommend having:

- ❑ A breastfeeding book for reference
- ❑ A breast pump, rarely used, but can be helpful
- ❑ Lanolin for tender nipples or *MotherLove* “Nipple Cream”
- ❑ A first-year parenting book for reference

LABOR and BIRTH

Labor usually starts with mild contractions that begin to seem stronger and closer together. It can be very helpful to remind yourself to rest in this period. If contractions remain mild and spaced out, continue doing whatever you normally do at that given time of night or day for as long as possible. If labor lasts many hours, you'll be glad you paced yourself – went back to sleep, ate a big breakfast, kept your appointment, whatever – even though you may be very excited. Labor that is here to stay will not go away or lessen with normal activities.

After some unpredictable number of days, or hours, or minutes, your contractions will become regular and long – every 5 minutes or less from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next and lasting at least 50-60 seconds. At this time your body will begin to take over direction from your mind and probably keep you moving. This is usually the beginning of active labor and does not end until your baby is in your arms. The work of active labor is to move and rotate your baby's head through your pelvic tissue, muscles, and bones – the more you move and rotate the more effective your labor will be. Remember your team mate here, talk to your baby and tell him or her what is happening and how he/she can help out.

When to call

Call as soon as you think you are in labor. A long heads-up is helpful for arranging schedules and assistants, but sometimes labor sneaks up on us and I'm prepared to come right away. Before 8am and after 10pm, if your contractions are mild or more than 10 minutes apart you can wait to call until contractions are at least 5 minutes apart and/or long and intense. Call me if you:

- have any concerns or questions;
- haven't felt the baby move for longer than usual;
- think the bag of waters has broken;
- are actively bleeding that is not normal bloody show;
- have severe abdominal or back pain even between contractions.

If your water breaks

Rupture of membranes may be felt as a "pop," followed by a trickle of fluid or a gush. There may be no fluid at first, especially if you are lying down. If you detect a trickle or gush of fluid that is different from previous secretions, call me. If your baby's head was high at our last prenatal visit, stay in bed when you call me. Note the time, color, amount, and odor, as well as your baby's movements. Together we will discuss a plan based on your individual situation.

If you are ruptured, it means that the protective membranes enclosing your baby are open, and the baby is vulnerable to outside bacteria and possible infection. Therefore, avoid putting anything in your vagina and don't take a bath until you're in active labor. Change your underwear and pad frequently. Wipe from front to back when using the toilet. Take your temperature every 4 hour while you are awake.

The bag of water breaks before labor in about 10% of women. Sometimes several hours pass before labor starts in earnest, even if you had some cramping or contractions right after the membranes ruptured. Most women birth within 24 hours of rupture, almost all within 48 hours.

The birth

I will call my assistant(s) when you are in active labor. Usually I am at your house and see that labor is progressing and have set everything up in readiness for birth prior to calling an assistant to your home. My assistant will help me monitor you and your baby and offer emotional and hands-on support until your baby is in your arms. I will work closely with you as you push your baby out to help prevent tearing or other complications. Assistant(s) will stay to help assess and clean up. We communicate our assessments clearly and openly, explaining as necessary, and will not hesitate to suggest transferring to the hospital if that seems to be the safest course. We do all we can to ensure your baby is welcomed gently and joyfully into your arms, whether at home or in hospital.

Preferences

Please share your wishes and concerns for your birth experience in depth, from partner involvement to preferred music or birth positions, nagging fears, etc. These preference can be so important to ensuring you keep the hormones of labor flowing and progressing toward the birth of your baby.

Some parents want to have photos or a video of the birth. If photos are important to you, ask a friend to be the camera-person, rather than asking one of the birth team. Instruct him or her to pan the room occasionally for the “birth scene,” as well as to zoom in on people’s faces. Make sure whoever is operating the camera has adequate experience and knows how to manage film changing, battery failure, etc.

Positive affirmations are a good way to redirect recreational worrying or habitual self-doubt. Post on your refrigerator affirmations that are meaningful to you and your partner. Then repeat them to yourself as often as you drive, walk, brush your teeth, etc.

Remember, you and your baby are a team in this endeavor. Begin talking to your baby every day. Chant your baby into a good labor position:

*Head down,
chin tucked,
back to belly,
hands to side –
yay baby! yay baby!*

People at the birth

Remember this is your home and your birth experience. You do not need the midwife’s permission to invite people to attend your birth. People who attend your birth are ideally comfortable with the idea of home birth. You must feel at ease and safe with everyone present. I can’t stress enough how important it is to avoid inviting someone out of a sense of guilt or obligation. This is a time to be selfish and heed your gut feelings about comfort and safety. Many people feel the act of birth is as private as love-making, while others welcome a party atmosphere. Whichever way you lean, it is important that each person at the birth – your midwife and her assistant included! – knows that if his or her presence is making your work more difficult or distracted, you may ask him or her to leave or go into another room.

Helpers at the birth should be prepared to HELP. They can prepare food for the family and birth team, take care of older children, do laundry, run errands etc.

Children and animals at birth

Children and pets generally are very wise and instinctual in the presence of birth. They will interpret and believe whatever you tell or show them about labor and birth, because they have not been shaped by fear-provoking images. Children can be prepared for labor sights and sounds by integrating daily role-play of intermittent moans and groans and various labor positions. “This is what mama’s going to sound like when the baby is coming...” You can also watch videos, read birthing books, and discuss the child’s potential role or job at birth, such as picture-taking, water-offering, or cutting the umbilical cord.

It is essential to have someone at the birth whose primary role is child support. This person should not be the father or partner, but someone else with whom your child feels very comfortable. Your child may want to leave the room if he/she is uncomfortable, and the helper taking care of your child must be willing to miss the birth if needed elsewhere.

POSTPARTUM

After the birth, we stay with you and assess your recovery and your baby's transition for a minimum of 2 hours. I will review written and verbal postpartum self and baby cares and warning signs. I remain available by phone around the clock and return 24-36 hours after the birth, as well as at 3 days postpartum. I will file the birth certificate worksheet and perform the newborn screen for metabolic disorders. I create a labor and birth summary for you, in which there is space for your baby's footprints if you wish. I recommend a final postpartum check-up 4-6 weeks after the birth.

If there is any concern regarding you or the baby, I will help you obtain medical care or other assistance and/or see you myself as often as necessary.

Baby doctor

I recommend that your baby be seen by either a physician or myself at about 2 weeks of age, sooner if indicated. I will fax a birth summary to the physician of your choice. If your newborn is healthy, there is no medical reason to leave your home before your baby is two weeks old. Many families like to identify a baby physician before the birth occurs. I can provide a list of physicians supportive of attachment parenting and individualized decision-making at any time.

Cleanliness

You and your baby share your internal and household bacteria. A well-balanced bacterial ecosystem is important for your own and your baby's immunity. I recommend ingesting probiotics daily during at least the last month of pregnancy, as well as any other immune boosters you generally find effective, such as garlic, vitamin C, raw vegetables and fruits, etc. Hand-washing is important for your own and your baby's protection. However, consider replacing antibiotic soaps and household cleansers with gentler, beneficial bacteria- preserving soaps.

Car seat

Obtain and install a car seat before the baby is born. Make sure you like how it fits your hand and that it is easy to get in and out of your car. If you have any questions regarding installation, contact your local fire department. They typically offer a free check that the car seat is secured appropriately. Other sites in the Madison area:

St Mary's Hospital Medical Center
Madison, WI - Dane County
Contact: Holly 608-258-6859

Madison Area SAFE KIDS
SAFE KIDS Buckle Up
Madison, WI - Dane County
To make an appointment call 608-890-8999