

ANA'S *Free Guides* FOR BIRTH



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INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent means you have the right to understand any test, procedure, or intervention being offered to you, and to decide whether or not you want it. It's not just signing forms—it's about making sure you understand your options and feel comfortable with your choices.



Why it matters

Labor and birth often bring unexpected decisions. Informed consent ensures your voice is central in those decisions. Feeling informed and respected leads to greater confidence, satisfaction, and healing—no matter how birth unfolds.

When faced with a decision the BRAIN tool can help guide questions:

Benefits: What are the benefits?

Risks: What are the risks and side effects?

Alternatives: What other options are available?

Intuition: What does my gut say?

Nothing: What happens if we wait or do nothing for now?

PAIN MANAGEMENT



Understanding Pain

Labor pain is real—but it's also unique because it has a purpose, it changes throughout the process, and there are many ways to cope. How you think about pain and knowing how pain works can help you feel more confident and prepared.

Pain Control Theories

Pain-Fear-Tension Cycle

- Fear causes tension in the body.
- Tension makes contractions feel more painful.
- More pain increases fear

Application: reassurance, encouragement, and tools to reduce fear and tension.

Gate Control Theory

- Your spinal cord acts like a “gate” for pain messages.
- Stimulating other nerve pathways (touch, massage, movement, warmth, sound) can “close the gate,” reducing pain signals reaching the brain.

Application: counterpressure, massage, rebozo techniques, movement, or sound.

Diffuse Noxious Inhibitory Control

- The brain can only focus on so many sensations at once.
- Introducing new sensations can override the perception of contraction pain.

Application: squeezing a comb, applying heat/cold, or strong massage when pain feels overwhelming.

The 3 R's of Coping in Labor

RELAXATION

Keeping muscles soft helps labor progress and reduces tension. Letting go of unnecessary tension so your body can focus on the work of labor. Tense muscles can make contractions feel more painful and slow progress. Relaxation conserves energy, eases discomfort, and helps the uterus work efficiently.

RHYTHM

Finding a steady rhythm (breathing, swaying, rocking, moaning) helps the body ride the wave of contractions. A steady pattern—whether in movement, breath, or sound—anchors you through each wave of intensity and signals to the brain that you are safe.

RITUAL

A ritual is a repeated, intentional practice you return to with each contraction. It combines relaxation and rhythm, and adds meaning or comfort through consistency.

Labor pain is not just something to “get through”—it's something you can work with. By understanding how pain works and using tools like the 3 R's, you can feel calmer, more in control, and supported every step of the way.

BIRTH PREFERENCES

Name:

Support Team:

This is a guide to help our care team understand our wishes and values. We understand that birth can be unpredictable, and these preferences may change depending on circumstances.

Induction/Augmentation

- Open to Cytotec/Cervidil
- Open to foley balloon
- Open to stripping membranes
- Open to pitocin

Pain Management

- Use TENS, breathing, massage, movement
- Please do not offer such options unless I specifically request it.
- I am open to the following IV meds:
- I am open to an epidural.

Cesarean Delivery

In the event of a cesarean delivery:

- At least one person from my support team present throughout surgery and recovery
- Dimmer lights if possible
- My own music/no music
- Team to narrate what is happening for reassurance
- Clear drape/lower drape at birth
- See my baby upon birth
- Skin-to-skin in OR if possible
- Support person to hold the baby if I am not able to
- Support person to take pictures of baby while newborn checks are performed in OR

Baby Care Plan

- Vitamin K injection
- Eye ointment
- Hepatitis B vaccine
- Delay bath/hospital bath/Parents will bathe baby
- Exclusively breastfed/formula fed/combo
- No pacifier/pacifier
- Circumcision at hospital/ No circumcision

During Labor

- Support team present with me at all times
- Dimmed lights, quiet, limited interruptions, team to speak in calm low voices
- Freedom to move around and drink/eat
- Intermittent auscultation/continuous monitoring
- (IV line for fluids and medications/heparin or saline lock/no preference) placed in forearm/upper arm instead of hand/wrist
- It is OK/Not OK for people in training to be present during labor and delivery.
- The following if available:
 - birthing ball
 - peanut ball
 - birthing stool
 - birthing chair
 - squat bar
 - warm shower/bath

During Birth

- Pushing position (upright/side-lying/hands & knees positions)
- Avoid use delivery assistance tools
- Prefer to tear naturally (no episiotomy)
- Mother-directed/coached pushing
- Use a mirror to see baby's birth
- Dimmed lights and quiet environment

After Birth

- Baby to be placed on my bare skin immediately after birth
- Do not wipe vernix
- Physiologic delivery of placenta
- Delayed cord clamping for at least X minutes/until chord is white
- Prefer routine newborn checks to be performed after golden hour and while baby is skin-to-skin/on chest, unless medical concerns require otherwise.
- Breastfeeding as soon as possible after birth