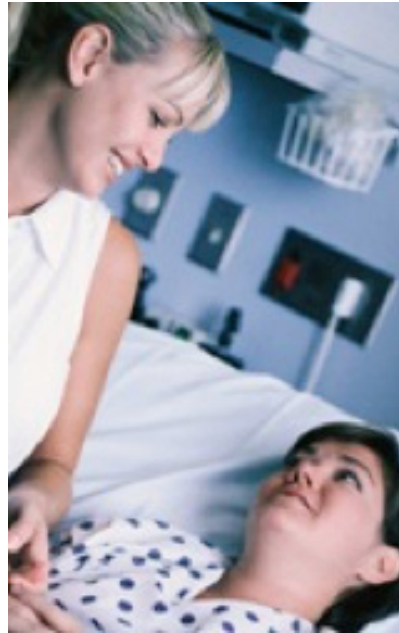


Delivery Time: Getting Ready for Your Hospital Stay

It is about that time. You have been awaiting – perhaps not so patiently – the arrival of your newest family member. The due date is drawing near and you may wonder what you should do to get ready for labor and your hospital stay in general. Rest assured that if you prepare, you will be ready when your baby is ready to make an entrance into the world.

The idea of labor and delivery can be scary, especially as you near the end of your pregnancy. Many women share their past childbirth stories freely, which may lead to more anxiety than reassurance among some first-time mothers. Rather than rely on the stories of family members and friends, it is a good idea to **attend childbirth classes when you are in your sixth to seventh month of pregnancy**. This will help you and your support person become familiar with the stages of labor and what to expect. If you are unable to attend childbirth classes, it may be helpful to at least read about the childbirth process in reference books.



Next, **talk to your doctor about your labor options**, especially for pain control, and any concerns you may have. Outline a birth plan to let your doctors know what you envision as your ideal labor and delivery. They will do everything to help make this the positive experience that you want. But be flexible since every labor and delivery is different. The safety of you and your baby needs to be the highest priority. Doctors may have to deviate from the birth plan to ensure safety. They will discuss the reasons with you as your needs change during labor.

Do not forget to talk to your support person. You may assume they will know how to support you, but let them know what you expect of them beforehand, and also at any time during labor and delivery. If you do not have a family member or friend to offer support during childbirth, consider hiring a professional labor support person, sometimes called a doula.

In your last trimester, take a tour of the labor and delivery unit at the hospital. Attend a pre-admission appointment before you go into labor. Ask your doctor how you will know when you should come to the hospital. You will also want to decide how you will get to the hospital and who will go with you. The plan may vary if you are at home or work. Have more than one route planned in case traffic presents a problem.

Finally, you will feel more prepared if you **pack for the hospital by the time you are in your 36th week**. It is a good idea to pack two bags for your hospital stay. The first bag should have items you will need to be more comfortable during your labor and a second bag with things you will not need until after the baby is born.

PACKING LIST FOR LABOR AND DELIVERY

- Identification and health insurance information
- Hospital pre-registration paperwork (if applicable)
- Birth plan
- Digital camera, video camera, batteries, chargers
- Relaxation and time-passing tools: MP3 player, books, playing cards, DVDs, back massager
- Toiletries, including lotion or oils for massage
- Lip balm
- Hair brush or comb
- Hair clips
- Socks or slippers
- Sweater or sweatshirt for support person (It can be cool in labor rooms.)
- Phone book, calling card, and cell phone
- Change for vending machines
- Baby book and pen

PACKING LIST FOR AFTER DELIVERY

- Robe
- Nightgown
- Underwear
- Nursing bra
- Nursing pads for leakage
- Snacks (if the cafeteria is closed)
- Toiletries – toothbrush, toothpaste, and cosmetics
- Change for vending machines
- A loose-fitting outfit for leaving the hospital
- Baby clothes, particularly an outfit for going home
- Cap, socks, and blanket for baby
- Outerwear for baby (in cold weather)
- Infant car seat (required by law)

These packing items are suggestions. Just remember to leave valuables, such as wallets and jewelry, at home.